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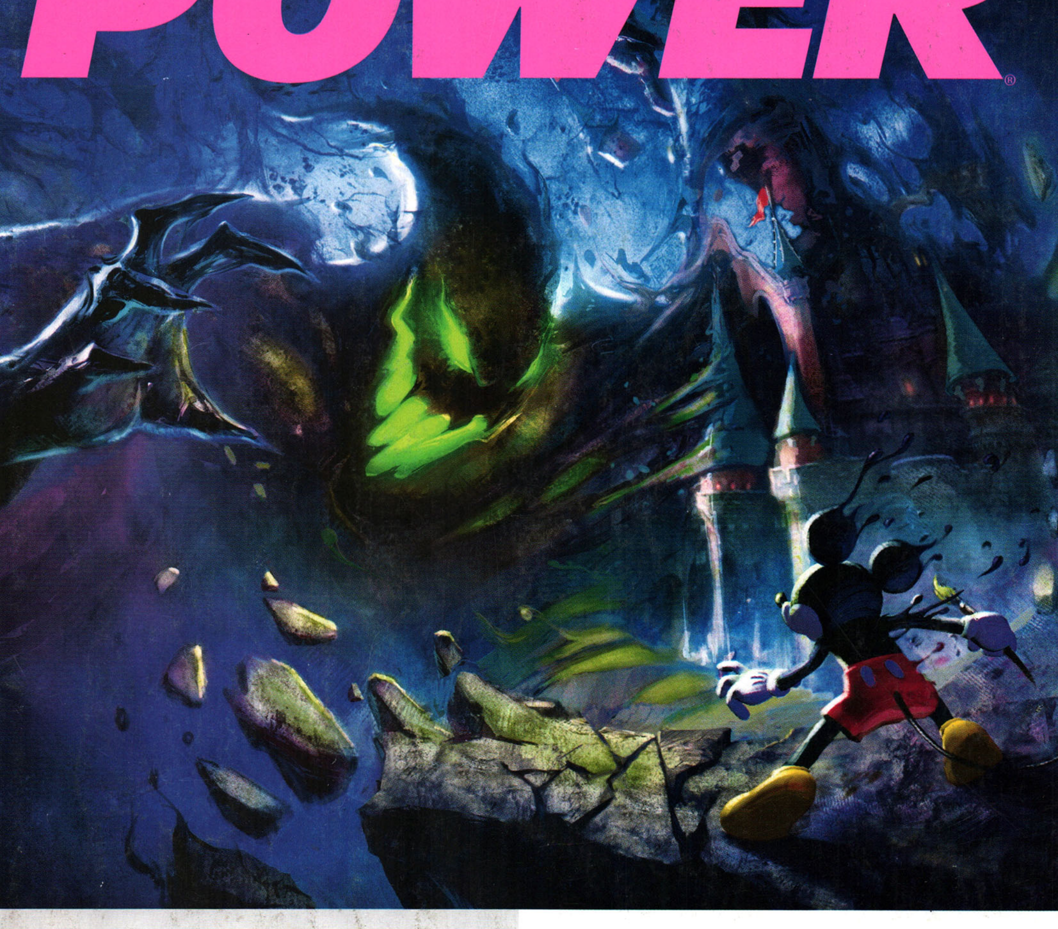

Epic Mickey • Metroid: Other M • Kirby's Epic Yarn • Sonic 4 • Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs • Professor Layton and the Unwound Future • NBA Jam

259

OCTOBER 2010

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"A promise to cure

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10+
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Lyrics

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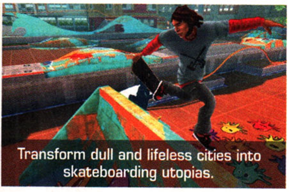

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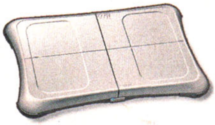

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It's Mickey Mouse like you've never seen him before in Epic Mickey for Wii! 10 pages of exclusive new details deliver an unpredented look at one of the year's most promising games.

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There's no denying that Metroid is one of the greatest game franchises of all time. But what's the saga's best game? Best ability? best enemy? Find out here!

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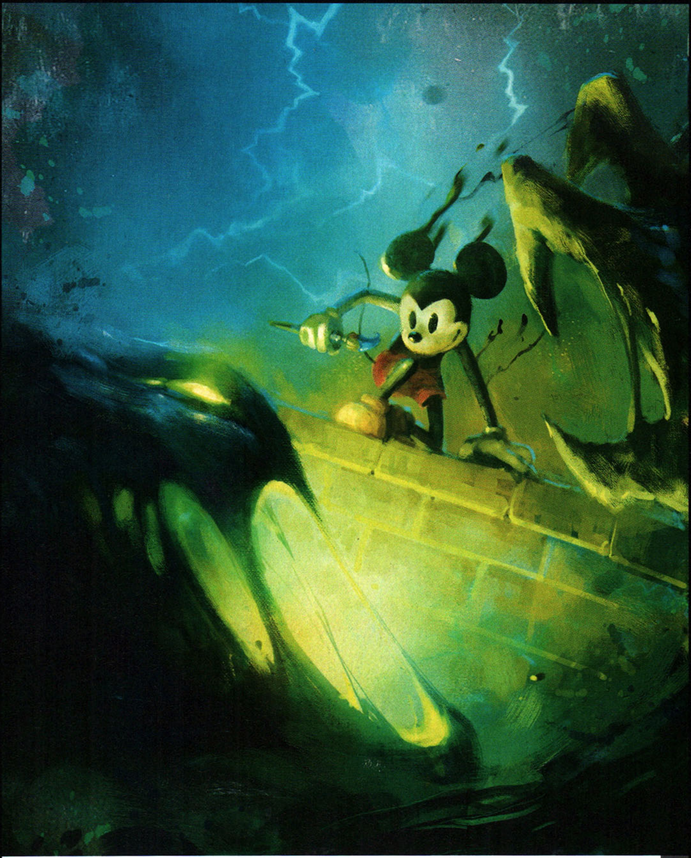
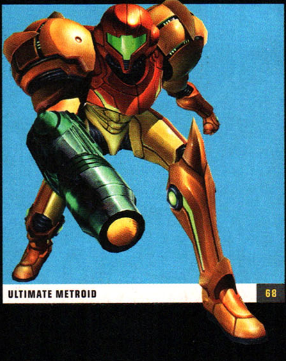
Remember Lufia on the Super NES? If not, don't worry about it. We'll get you up to speed on why Lufia: Curse of the Sinistrals might be the DS game that RPG fans have been waiting for.



EPIC MICKEY 58



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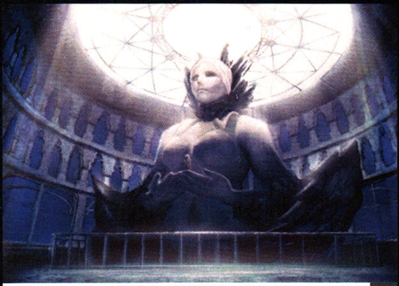

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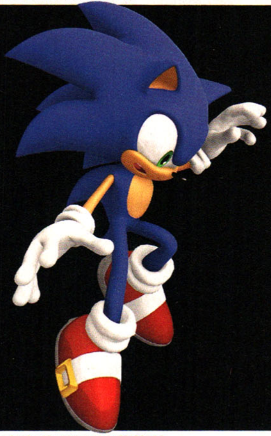
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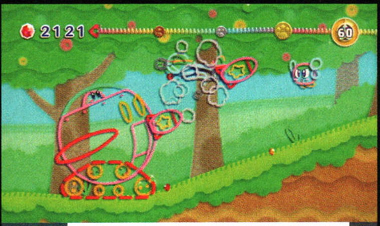

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DW = DSiWARE
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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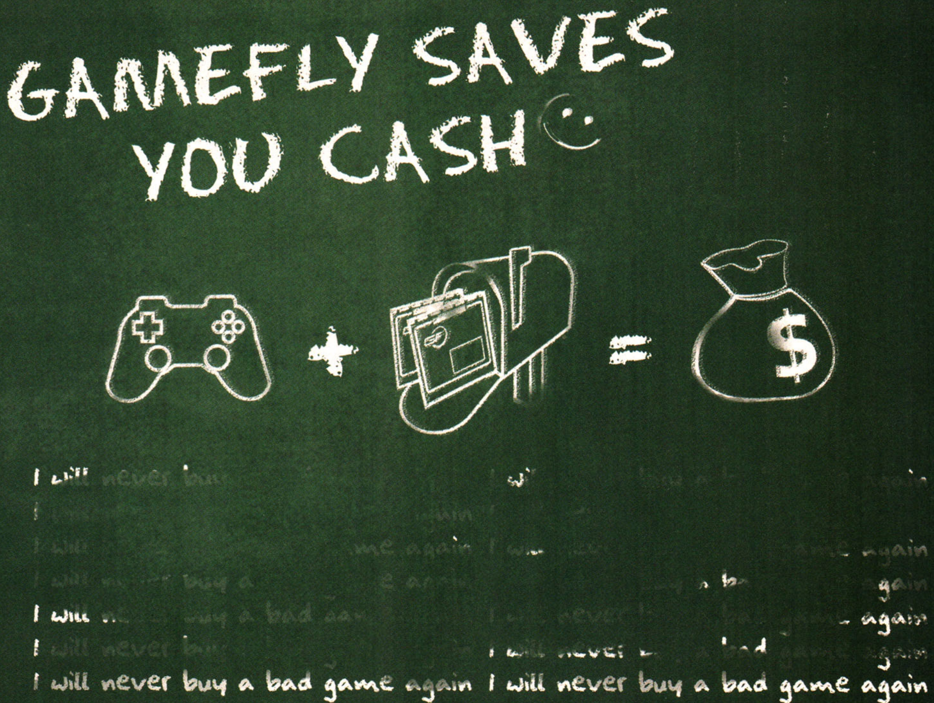
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Pulse

A Chance to Shine

Chris Slate

I didn't immediately jump aboard Willy's steamboat when I first heard about Epic Mickey. I know the mouse is a cultural icon and everything, but I haven't had much to do with him since I was a kid, and games based on licensed cartoon characters tend to be of questionable quality these days. But once I understood what superstar creator Warren Spector was going for with his ambitious new game, I became a full-fledged Mouseketeer. When handled properly, a star like Mickey can shine even brighter than before and bring out the kid in all of us. Back in the day, games like Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers, The Magical Quest Starring Mickey Mouse, and DuckTales were some of the best around, even if you didn't know Huey from Dewey or Louie. It just goes to show that, while game makers can't count on a cool character to carry a lame game, the right approach can result in something special that everyone will want to be a part of.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

NINTENDO 3DS
NINTENDO POWER
FALL GAME GUIDE
TWO NEW POKÉMON GAMES
CUTTING-EDGE
We test the revolutionary new controls of The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for Wii

V258 SEPTEMBER 2010

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while playing GoldenEye with Goofy. But first, this month's special letter request: what's the hardest, craziest, or silliest thing you've ever done to get a game? Send your responses to the address on page 8, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

Note: Those who failed to sign their letter shall be branded with the miserable moniker of one gaming's very worst characters.

Guides? Where?

I've noticed over the past few issues that NP has advertised The Official Guide to The Legend of Zelda and The Official Guide to Mario. Where can I buy these two guides? I've checked your website and other gaming retailers and can't find it. **—DAVID**

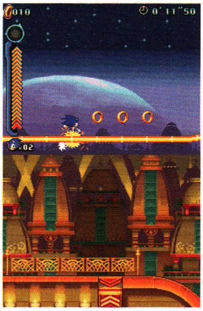
Nintendo Power special issues are available at most bookstores and pretty much anywhere that sells lots of magazines. For those who don't know, these two guides detail the history of our favorite heroes. The Mario version is no longer for sale, but the Legend of Zelda edition is still available!

Two Games, One Name

You know what's really irritating? When there are totally different DS and Wii games with the same title! Sonic Colors, Batman: The Brave and the Bold, and de Blob: The Underground are just the latest examples in a long list. Don't you think these publishers are hurting themselves by giving players the impression that there's no reason to buy both? Not to mention it's a hassle having to specify the version every time you bring a game up. **—ALT**

I'm no marketing expert, but this trend doesn't make any sense to me, either. When the Wii and Nintendo DS versions of a game have divergent content, you need different titles (or unique subtitles, at least) to make that clear. Otherwise, gamers may play just one, thinking that both versions are pretty much the same, and miss out on a second fun, original experience.

The Wii and Nintendo DS versions of Sonic Colors are obviously two very different games. Why use the same name?



I love the cel-shaded graphics of The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, the character proportions in Twilight Princess, and the over-the-top look of The Minish Cap. Put all three together and what do you get? The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword. It's the perfect blend of Zelda art styles. —**ZELDADARKNESS64**

Unsheathe your blade and immerse yourself in epic adventure in all-new ways with The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword for Wii.

YOU ARE LEGEND

Sam and Us

Dudes of Power, help me settle a bet. Is it pronounced SAY-mus, SAM-us, or SAW-mus? I have an ultra-rare copy of Super Mario All-Stars on the line! —**ZEEKYBOOGYDOOG**

Ms. Aran's name is pronounced "SAM-us"—at least, that's how it's spoken in Metroid: Other M and Super Smash Bros. Brawl. I hope you didn't lose your copy of Super Mario All-Stars!

Brother versus Beast

The past few issues of Nintendo Power have exalted Yoshi while stomping Luigi like a lowly Goomba. I revisited Yoshi's first adventure, Super Mario World for the Super NES, and immediately found two reasons why Luigi is better than Yoshi.

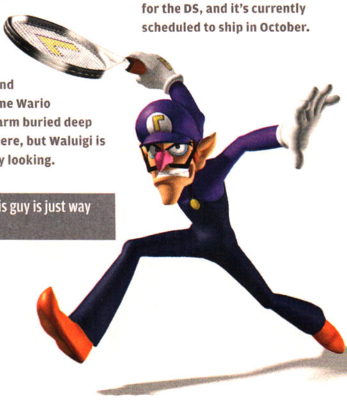
1. Yoshi refuses to follow you into a single ghost house while, on Nintendo GameCube, Luigi conquers an entire haunted mansion all by himself.

2. Luigi can take a punch with as much machismo as Mario, but if Yoshi takes one for the team he instantly throws his rider to the ground and gallops off a cliff in panic. Luigi may be a "green moocher," but Yoshi is a prehistoric Lemming! —**JEFF E.**

10 Years of Creepiness

Mario Tennis reached its 10th anniversary in July, which means that Waluigi has also been around for 10 years (he debuted in that game). Don't you think it's time for everyone's favorite purple-wearing loser to get his own game? I think the best scenario would be something similar to Loony Toons: Duck Amuck; a batch of minigames where you try to make Waluigi as miserable as possible. For example, while he's trying to steal something from a museum, you could slow down his getaway and get him jail time. Or you could be playing a card game with him, catch him cheating, and have him booted out of the casino. —**MATTHEW R.**

I don't think I could ever get behind Waluigi as a traditional hero, but your ideas sound great. Waluigi's rotund partner in crime Wario has a little charm buried deep down somewhere, but Waluigi is just too creepy looking.



Seriously, this guy is just way too creepy.

The Way They Used to Be

For me, an RPG that is as challenging as it is creative is a precious gem. Skies of Arcadia Legends' rewarding difficulty and lush environments still fill my waking dreams (it was my first RPG). Both Golden Sun games are just as memorable. (I'm stoked to see Golden Sun: Dark Dawn on the way!) I miss those colorful, sprawling adventures, and the hard challenges and puzzles those games brought. No map, no problem. RPGs today seem too easy. Cupil Fury! —**URIAH G.**

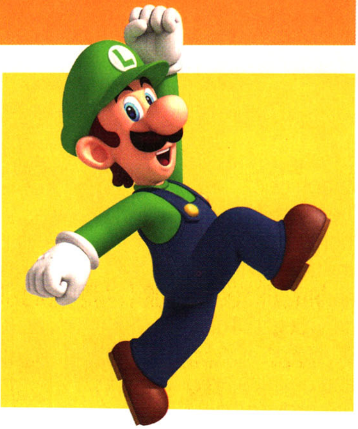
Uriah, if tough-as-nails, old-school questing is your thing, be sure to check out Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light for Nintendo DS, which was made with folks like you in mind. It's a totally original game, made exclusively for the DS, and it's currently scheduled to ship in October.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

I recently got The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, and it's awesome. Unfortunately, I'm only allowed to play it for an hour a day. When school starts again, I can only play on weekends! I frequently have to stop playing while in a dungeon, which means I have to restart it later. How can I convince my parents to give me more time? —**ALEX L.**

The Hoff says: The best way to get more time to play games is probably to become a ninja. If you've ever played the NES classic Kid Niki: Radical Ninja, then you're already aware that going to ninja school will at times involve fighting dudes with giant heads and horrendously bad breath, and battling huge flesh-eating grubs. All told, the training will probably be an arduous process that takes at least a decade, but think how cool it will be when you're able to turn yourself invisible and play games right in front of your parents for hours without them even noticing. Plus, you'll have an excuse to wear those sweet tabi boots.

It would be great if, in a new Super Mario RPG, Luigi could try to become a villain. However, not knowing what to do, he would only end up committing misdemeanors, shouting things like, "Ha, look at me! I'm-a walking on the grass!" —**GEX**



How would you turn heroes into villains and vice versa?

Fawful could make a crazy ray gun that he shoots at heroes and villains to turn them into one another (Mario to Bowser, Ganon to Link, Samus to either Dark Samus or Ridley, etc.) and cause chaos in the Nintendo world. But the best part would be having Luigi point the ray gun at Fawful, who then swaps places with him. An unnoticed villain turns into an unnoticed hero, which makes sense. —**FISHERSPOT**

It seems unavoidable that Mario's extensive travels between galaxies would take him to the planet SR388, where he would come in contact with the X Parasite, which would steal his hat and turn it into MA-X. MA-X would go on to cause all kinds of chaos in the Mushroom Kingdom, giving Mario the unfortunate moniker of "villain." Then, Bowser—thinking the culprit is the real Mario—would manage to destroy MA-X and become a great hero. —**DANIEL T.**

My favorite hero-and-villain mix-up would be Kirby and King Dedede. How exactly would it happen? They both take a nasty blow to the head with each other's hammers. Kirby then thinks he is Dedede, and Dedede thinks he's Kirby. Now Kirby sits in the lap of luxury at the castle while Dedede is the homeless guy that survives off of picnic foods from parts unknown. —**KID CLOWN**

I think that Link would be the easiest Nintendo character to turn evil. Come on, we've all seen his dark side: he was caught shoplifting in Link's Awakening, has a history of abusing animals, and destroys public property (people put a lot of time into those signs he cuts down, you know!). His dark side will prevail, soon...*very* soon. —**???**

If I were to change a villain into a hero, it would be Ganondorf. At the end of The Wind Waker, where he admits his obsession with dominating Hyrule, he seemed to be more of a tragic character than simply villainous. I would like to explore his early days as the only male in the Gerudo Tribe, chosen to be king before he even knew what it meant. I'd like to see him struggle with the choice to give up everything he ever cared about in his quest for power; a game where he has to face the truth of the humanity he abandoned. It could end with a battle between the human side that is Ganondorf and the monster that is Ganon. —**GRETHOS**

What if, in the next Super Smash Bros. game, there was an item that could corrupt a character and another that could purify? For example, corrupted Mario would have a black shirt and tattered overalls, spiked shoes, and a ruffled mustache. Purified Bowser would have a smooth, spikeless shell, a comet tail, no horns, and Paratroopa wings. —**THE TRIFORCE OF AWESOMENESS**

I would give the bad guys a good reason for their actions. For instance, what if Bowser's mom was sick and only Peach could cure her? That would put both Bowser and Mario in a different light. —**MAPDRAGON**

After so much time spent with Bowser, what if Princess Peach became attracted to him? (The guy *does* go out on a limb for her.) Mario might not take the hint and then "rescue" her against her will! You could play as Bowser trying to retrieve his kidnapped Princess from Mario! —**REBECCA**

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Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT **WWW. NINTENDOPOWER. COM/POLLS.**

TURN-BASED BATTLES RULE

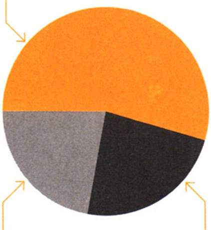
53%

of you prefer taking turns over real-time combat in RPGs

75 PERCENT of you first met Kid Icarus hero Pit in Super Smash Bros. Brawl.

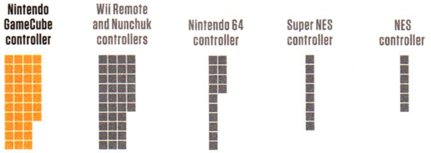
What's your favorite look for Mario?

POLYGONAL
(as in Super Mario Galaxy)



Flat (as in Paper Mario)
Sprite (as in Super Mario Bros.)

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE NINTENDO CONTROLLER?

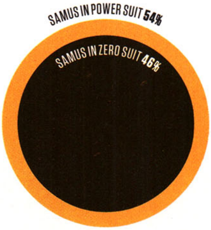


FOR MY SIDEKICK, I WOULD CHOOSE

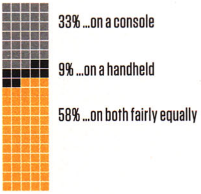
DIDDY KONG

33%

Tails 27%
Navi 26%
Slippy Toad 8%
Rush 6%



I PREFER TO PLAY NINTENDO'S BIG FRANCHISE GAMES...

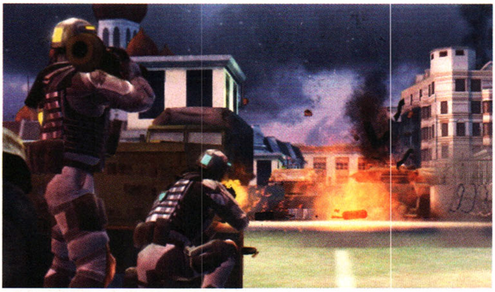


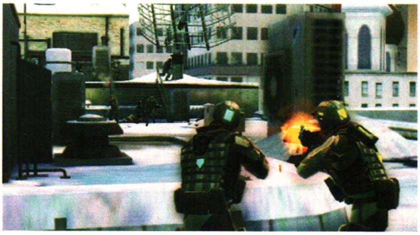
WHICH MEGA MAN SERIES IS YOUR FAVORITE?

58% MEGA MAN

13% Mega Man Zero
12% Mega Man X
7% Mega Man Battle Network
4% Mega Man Legends
4% Mega Man Star Force
2% Mega Man ZX

POWER UP

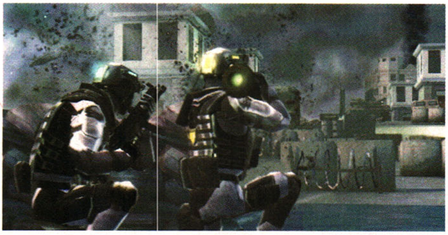


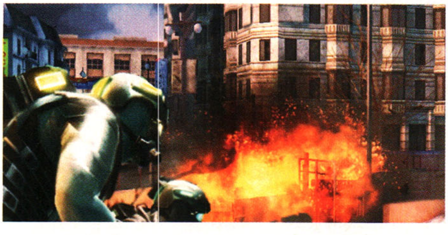


As with previous installments, most of the levels in Ghost Recon for Wii revolve around urban warfare.

Ghost Recon Levels Up

The studio behind Punch-Out!! and Super Mario Strikers readies an all-new, Wii-exclusive take on Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon.





EARLIER THIS YEAR Ubisoft announced that it would finally bring a Ghost Recon title to the Wii console. At the time, everyone assumed it would be a port of the recently announced Xbox 360/ PlayStation 3 game, Ghost Recon: Future Soldier. It turns out that assumption was wrong. Instead, the publisher has recruited the talented folks at Next Level Games to craft a new installment of the popular franchise from the ground up.

Titled simply Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, this entry takes a unique approach that falls somewhere between light-gun game and full-blown third-person shooter—with a heavy emphasis on co-op play. Both characters appear on the same screen at once and progress along a linear path using a point-and-click interface to move from cover to cover. At each stop, your troops will stay behind cover by default, stepping out only when you hold the Z Button to take aim at your foes. In keeping with the spirit of the series, a methodical approach works best; you won't make it very far if you just stand out in the open and try to mow down everyone, Rambo-style. Coordination with your partner is crucial, as well. When you're trying to lock onto an enemy gunship with your rocket launcher, for example, you'll need your buddy to protect you from enemy ground forces by laying down suppressive fire. For those rare instances in which teamwork proves insufficient, you can activate your Focus ability to temporarily slow things down (though its use is limited to a few times per level). A CPU-controlled partner will fight alongside you in the absence of a flesh-and-blood compatriot, and Next Level is putting lots of work into making sure that the AI behaves intelligently. The developer is also committed to mixing things up over the course of the game; certain levels will require stealth, for instance, while others put you behind a helicopter turret.

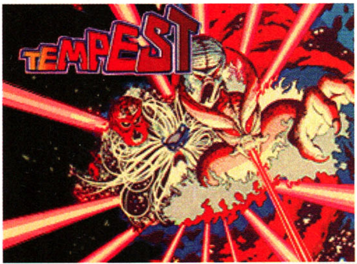
In addition to the primary campaign, Ghost Recon will include an Arcade mode that lets you compete against another player for the highest score. You'll earn point multipliers for every enemy you defeat, though you'll lose those multipliers for taking damage, which lends the proceedings a nice risk-reward element. There's also a cooperative Arcade mode that combines your multipliers and uploads your cumulative score to an online leaderboard. Rounding out the package is an Achievement system, which rewards you for certain accomplishments throughout the game and unlocks new characters for Arcade mode (including some familiar faces from other Tom Clancy titles).

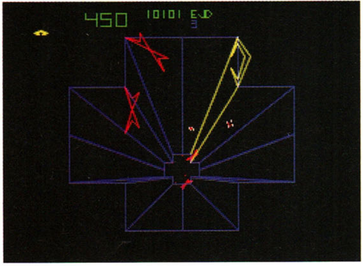
Ghost Recon is currently slated for a November release. Our early play test showed promise, and the game's director—Mike Inglehart—held the same position on Punch-Out!! and Super Mario Strikers. Hopefully he and his team can do for Clancy what they did for Little Mac. **—STEVE T.**

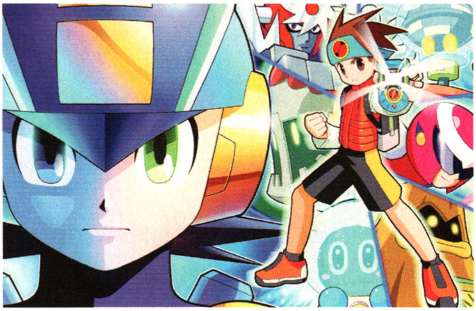
Old School Is Back in Session

The fun is back—oh, yessiree! **Atari's Greatest Hits** and **Intellivision Lives!** are headed to Nintendo DS.

BELIEVE IT OR not, there were actually video game consoles before the NES. In the early 1980s, systems like the Atari 2600 and Mattel's Intellivision were the hottest thing around. And soon you'll be able to experience those systems' games on the Nintendo DS handheld. Atari will be publishing Atari's Greatest Hits Vol. 1 this October; the compilation will contain 50 arcade and Atari 2600 games—Asteroids, Pong, Missile Command, Centipede, Tempest, and more—in their original forms, along with bonus content such as a memorabilia showcase and a trivia challenge. If you're more of an Intellivision fan, you can look forward to the September release of Intellivision Lives! (published by Virtual Play Games), which contains 60 classics, including Shark! Shark! and B-17 Bomber. **—CHRIS H.**







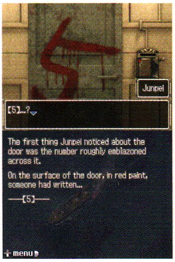
Mega Man Gets Artistic

MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK
ロックマン エグゼ オフィシャルコンプリートワークス
OFFICIAL COMPLETE WORKS

Capcom may not be releasing a new Mega Man Star Force game in 2010 (oh, the horror!) but fans can get their fix from UDON Entertainment. Late this year the publisher will release two art books focused on Mega Man's cyberspace-based RPG exploits—Mega Man Battle Network: Official Complete Works and Mega Man Star Force: Official Complete Works. Each will contain 176 pages of Mega Man goodness. **—CHRIS H.**

NINE LIVES

Japanese developer Chunsoft has won great acclaim for its story-rich adventure games, but the text-heavy titles are rarely localized for Western audiences. Luckily publisher Aksys Games has decided to take a chance on Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors, a mind-bending DS mystery in which the player controls nine characters trapped in different parts of a sinking ship. The twist-filled story is packed with math and logic puzzles, and the beautiful artwork and character designs by longtime Capcom artist Kinu Nishimura make the game a treat for the eyes as well as the mind. **—CASEY L.**



【5】...?

The first thing Junpei noticed about the door was the number roughly emblazoned across it.

On the surface of the door, in red paint, someone had written...

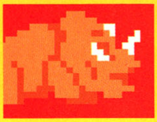
——【5】——

A WINNER IS...

Weekly downloadable Dragon Quest IX content!

DODONGO DISLIKES...

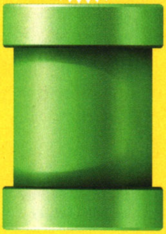
The peculiar odor at San Diego Comic-Con.



WARP ZONE

What we were writing about way back when

5 YEARS AGO



SUPER MARIO MESS AVERTED!

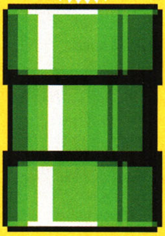
MARKETING MARIO: THE NEW LOOK

Confidential

REJECTED

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire was the cover story, but the October 2005 issue was jam-packed with other interesting tidbits, including an exposé on the seemingly lost art of 2D game design, a faux Mario makeover, and the kickoff of the NP Top 200 feature, which listed Nintendo Power's 161st through 200th best games of all time. (Harvest Moon: Another Wonderful Life for GameCube was ranked #200.) Also, Chris Shepperd was electrocuted by a yellow, mouselike creature.

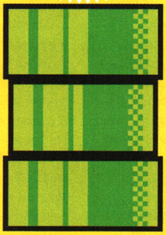
10 YEARS AGO



The October 2000 issue was a big one. The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask—arguably the most unusual game in the Zelda series—graced the cover, and the accompanying eight-page article gave adventurers all the knowledge they needed to survive their first six days in Termina. The issue also provided the first look at the next generation of Nintendo systems: the Nintendo GameCube and the Game Boy Advance.

GAME BOY
Nintendo
GAME BOY ADVANCE

20 YEARS AGO



Nintendo Power Library Reference Copy

RATEGY

NINTENDO POWER

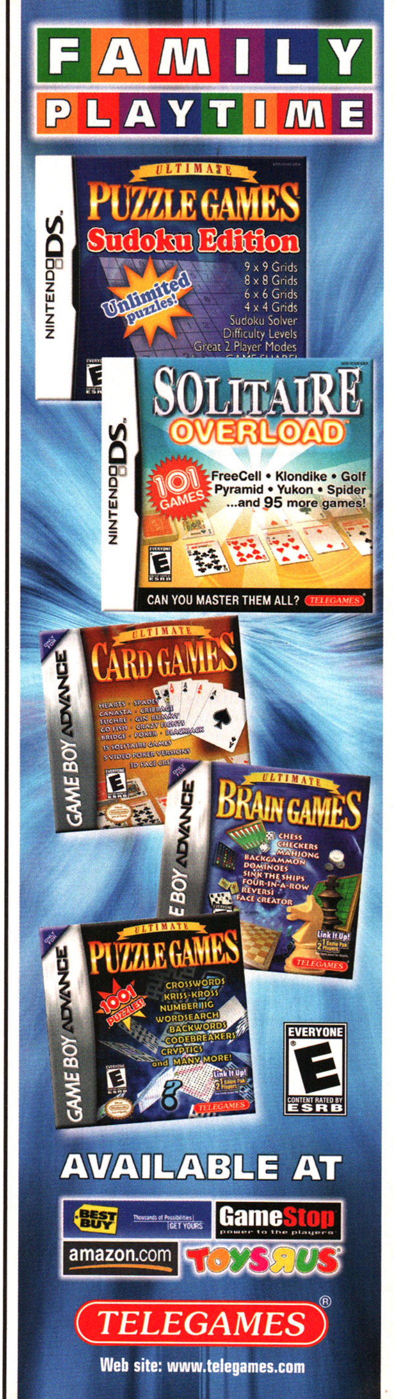
GUIDE

FINAL FANTASY

Weapons, spells, friends, foe maps lead to victory!

Nintendo PLAY TO WIN STRATEGIES STRAIGHT FROM THE PROS

In October 1990, Nintendo Power continued to experiment with bimonthly strategy guides dedicated to single games. This issue focused on Final Fantasy. That's right—the very first Final Fantasy for the NES. Before Final Fantasy was all about double-digit sequels and super-high-end production values that required zillions of programmers, Final Fantasy was introduced to North American audiences with its own dedicated issue of Nintendo Power.


FAMILY PLAYTIME
ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES Sudoku Edition
Unlimited puzzles!
9 x 9 Grids
8 x 8 Grids
6 x 6 Grids
4 x 4 Grids
Sudoku Solver
Difficulty Levels
Great 2 Player Modes
NINTENDO DS
SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD
101 GAMES
FreeCell • Klondike • Golf
Pyramid • Yukon • Spider
...and 95 more games!
CAN YOU MASTER THEM ALL?
TELEGAMES
ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
HEARTS · SPADES
CANASTA · CRIBBAGE
EUCHRE · GIN RUMMY
GO FISH · CRAZY EIGHTS
BRIDGE · POKER · BLACKJACK
15 SOLITAIRE GAMES
5 VIDEO POKER VERSIONS
GAME BOY ADVANCE
ULTIMATE BRAIN GAMES
CHESS
CHECKERS
MAHJONG
BACKGAMMON
DOMINOES
SINK THE SHIPS
FOUR-IN-A-ROW
REVERSI
FACE CREATOR
Link It Up!
ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES
1001 PUZZLES!
CROSSWORDS
KRISS-KROSS
NUMBER JIG
WORDSEARCH
BACKWORDS
CODEBREAKERS
CRYPTICS
and MANY MORE!
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
AVAILABLE AT
BEST BUY Thousands of Possibilities. Get Yours
GameStop power to the players
amazon.com
TOYS R US
TELEGAMES®
Web site: www.telegames.com

Beyond the Starry Skies

Post-release thoughts on **Dragon Quest IX** from the creator of the storied series.

WITH THE INTERNATIONAL launch of Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies behind him, Dragon Quest creator Yuji Horii discusses the challenges of making a multiplayer game, drops hints about where the series is going next, and reminisces about the era in which his countrymen considered him an "enemy to society." —**CASEY L.**

NINTENDO POWER **Before now, Japanese-style turn-based RPGs have always been a focused single-player experience. Were you ever worried that the genre simply might not work as a multiplayer game?**

YUJI HORII The truth is, I'm not actually wedded to the idea of turn-based battles. When I begin a new game, I always start by working out the mechanics, and so rather than assuming Dragon Quest IX would be turn-based, I approached it from the question of, "What sort of battle system would be ideal for a multiplayer Dragon Quest game?" At first, I had [developer] Level-5 create a prototype of a real-time action battle system. But when we actually played it, the problem was that I ended up having no idea what any character besides my own was doing. So next I had them make a prototype of a multiplayer battle system, based on traditional Dragon Quest mechanics. When we played that, strategizing as a team became a lot easier, because you could see what your comrades were doing and respond to that. That's what convinced me that a lot of fun could be had with the turn-based system.

In order to make Dragon Quest IX work as a multiplayer game, what changes needed to be made to the Dragon Quest formula?

I suppose the story structure was the biggest change. Previously, each of the Dragon Quest games had a single, epic storyline. When you reached the end, the game was basically over. But when a game ends, people put it away. So if a player who was progressing at a slower pace wanted to play multiplayer, he might find that there was no one left to play with. Because of this, I felt that DQIX needed to be a game that never ended. So we lightened the focus on the traditional central story, and tried to create a new story structure that would let players continue to play indefinitely after the ending rolled.

How did players respond to these changes? What aspect of the game's reception in Japan have you found most gratifying?

Because we downplayed the central story in favor of a structure that let people continue to play after the ending, I wasn't sure how players would react. I was really pleased to see the way everyone embraced the new play-beyond-the-ending structure, thanks to new systems like the treasure maps and downloadable quests.

Did you face any other unexpected challenges in creating this installment? Can you tell us what was behind the game's series of release-date delays in Japan?

Having to work out the complexities of the multiplayer component was the primary reason for the delays. Of course, there were the usual technical difficulties, but the huge amount of freedom in Dragon Quest IX created unique challenges. Players are free to invite a friend in for co-op or visit another player's game at any point in the progression of their own storyline, and it took a tremendous amount of time to work it out so that the game could allow co-op play under any possible circumstances.

What was the inspiration for DQIX's Celestrians storyline?

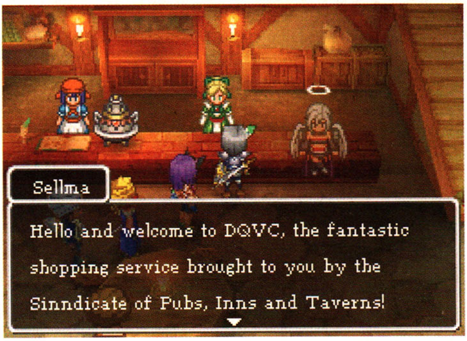
Every time I make a game, I rack my brain trying to figure out a way to get players emotionally evolved in the world of the story as quickly as possible. This time, I decided to use the existing archetype of a guardian angel to create a character role that anyone would immediately understand. An angel loses its wings and falls as a mortal into the town it used to protect.... It's a pretty conventional story, but I felt the familiarity of it would allow players to make that immediate emotional connection. And of course, I added a few twists to the formula! [Laughs]

You've told us many times of your love for "playing pranks" on players. Without spoiling anything, what are some of the tricks you were proud of in Dragon Quest IX?

Oh, there are a number of tricks, but probably the biggest one is the impish fairy [Stella] who follows the player around from the start of the game. She's constantly trying to irritate the player! [Laughs] There are actually an awful lot of cheeky characters in the Dragon Quest series. I guess you could say that's one of my ways of playing pranks on the players.

Were you concerned about how the Tag-mode features might be received in foreign markets, where there is a lower density of Dragon Quest IX players?

America is indeed different from Japan in that players will have to be a bit more proactive in order to make use of Tag mode. But I do think that there are a lot of interesting



Sellma

Hello and welcome to DQVC, the fantastic shopping service brought to you by the Sinndicate of Pubs, Inns and Taverns!

possibilities for those who are willing to take the initiative—for example, players could arrange meet-ups over Twitter or other social-networking services. Incidentally, we made a point of ensuring that players of the overseas version could "tag" players of the Japanese version, so if players ever visit Japan, they could get their hands on some rare Japanese treasure maps, for example, or spread their own maps from the overseas version throughout Japan.

Can you tell us about some of your favorite upcoming downloadable quests?
I don't want to say too much and spoil any of the upcoming quests, but one cool feature is that when you make a Wi-Fi connection to download the quests, characters from past Dragon Quest games sometimes come to visit your hotel. Those characters have special equipment and costumes that they'll give you, and if it's your birthday, they'll throw in a little something extra.

One day, after walking through the city with Tag mode on, I was stunned to notice that a large percentage of the people I had tagged had their birthday on that very day! After giving it some thought, I realized that they had set their birthdays to the present day in order to get the bonus gift from a visiting character, and had neglected to change it back. I got a good laugh out of that.

In terms of the pressure on you and mass-media interest, how did the Japanese release of Dragon Quest IX compare to the Dragon Quest releases of the NES era?
Back in the Famicom [NES] era, the mainstream media was very suspicious about the wild enthusiasm that greeted each new Dragon Quest release, and the releases were frequently subjected to baseless criticism. Nowadays, thankfully, they don't inspire that sort of controversy. (In those days, games were considered a bad influence on kids, and I was viewed as "an enemy to children and an enemy to society itself," and "the root of all evil.") The reporters who came to see me in the Famicom era were trying to make a villain out of me, but nowadays the reporters all say, "I used to play Dragon Quest when I was growing up!" and have a very positive attitude. I cannot tell you how happy that makes me!

Do you see the multiplayer features of Dragon Quest IX as a unique feature of this installment, or is it something that players can expect to see in the series going forward?
Before I had the idea of making it the official, ninth numbered Dragon Quest title, I embarked on this project with the goal of just trying to make a multiplayer Dragon Quest game. I think that approach is what enabled us to realize our goals so well. For the next game, I might want to try another different approach for making a Dragon Quest game. And in the course of that I might think, "sure, let's try adding multiplayer," and...well, I can't tell you anything more than that. Sorry.

In past interviews, you've mentioned that the features you're unable to implement in one Dragon Quest game often become the inspiration for the next sequel. Can you tell us about any features that didn't make the cut in this time that you would like to explore in the future?
Like I said, Dragon Quest IX turned out so well because we were able to realize our goal of making a multiplayer RPG that anyone could enjoy. So the next game could end up being something completely different. Whether or not a feature that I couldn't realize in Dragon Quest IX ends up being revived in the next game...that's something I can't talk about yet.

Finally, what does your character in Dragon Quest IX have to say to those who are lucky enough to encounter you in Tag mode?
I'm actually a very shy person, so when I use Tag mode, I do it in secret. In Japan, I've already tagged over a thousand different players, but I doubt that many of them have any idea it's me who they've tagged. When they see the details, like the map that my character holds, they might eventually figure it out. I get a secret thrill out of imagining the scene when they do! I guess that's another one of my little pranks! [Laughs]

Brigadoom - B1
NintyPow
Mythos
Spark
Alys

Does 19 points of damage to Morag.

NintyPow
Lv 14
HP 84
MP 29
Attack
Abilities
Spells
Items
Defend
Coup de Grâce
Mythos
Lv 13
HP 63
MP 69
Follow Orders
Spark
Lv 13
HP 83
MP 21
Follow Orders
Echo
Lv 10
HP 56
MP 42
Follow Orders

STAR POWER

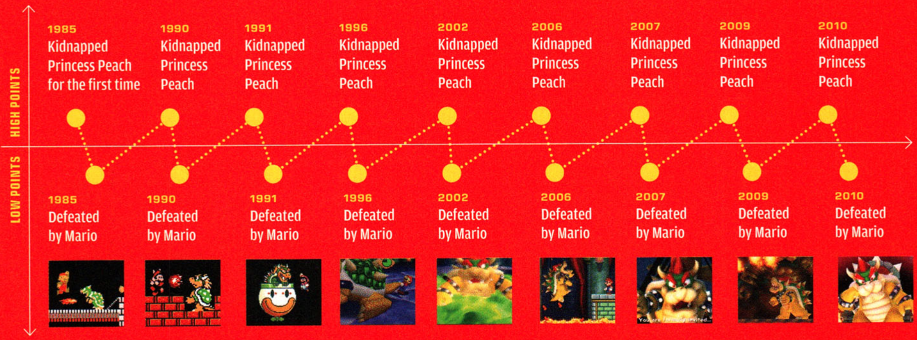
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
SUPER MARIO BROS.
NES, 1985

Bowser

The tyrannical Koopa king has a penchant for pilfering princesses, and a persistent plumber problem. Still, we can't help but love him.

CAREER GRAPH

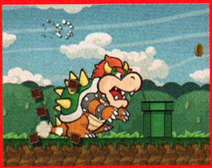


OUR FAVORITE BOWSER GAMES

Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars

SUPER NES, 1996

Such humiliation! Bowser finally became a playable character in Super Mario RPG, but it was at the cost of having to team up with his hated rival to defeat a giant, talking sword.



Paper Mario: The Thousand-Year Door

GAMECUBE, 2004

Sick of plumbers hogging all the glory, Bowser got to run wild in his own side-scrolling action stages in the second Paper Mario game, smashing and burning anything in his path.

Super Smash Bros. Brawl

Wii, 2008

The ginormous Giga Bowser first appeared in Super Smash Bros. Melee, but players got to actually control this ultimate form of Bowser by unleashing his Final Smash in Super Smash Bros. Brawl.

Right! And now we take back my castle!

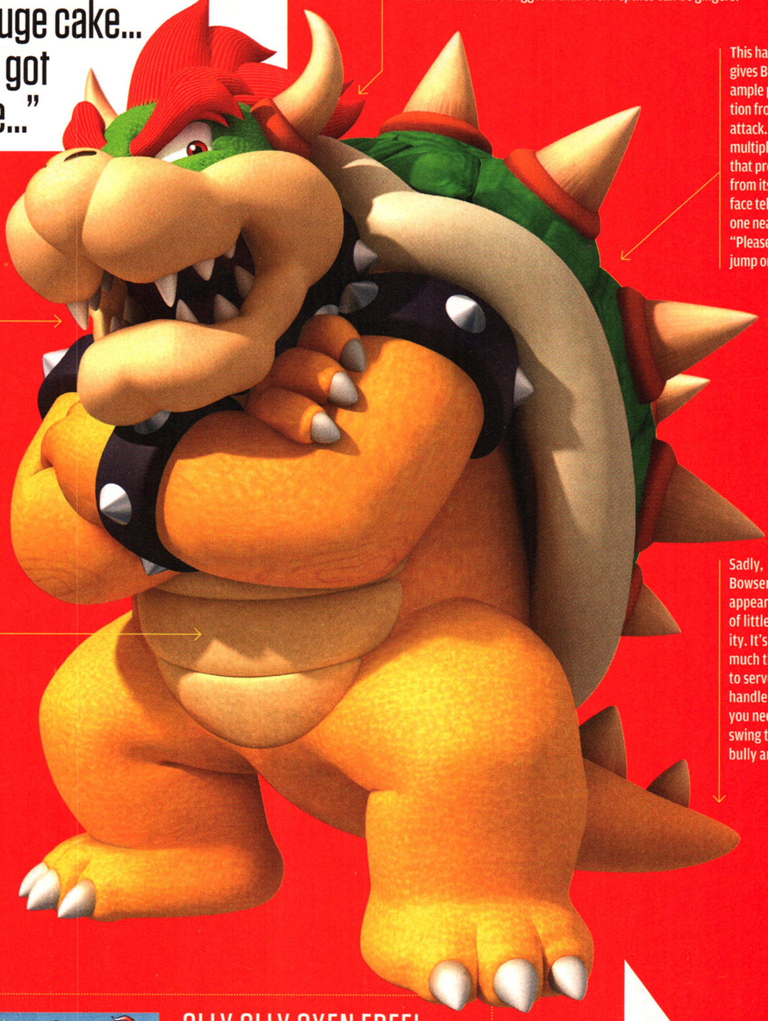
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story

NINTENDO DS, 2009

In this game, Bowser wasn't just playable—a good portion of the adventure actually took place within his body. (Gross.) Bowser also got to duke it out with his evil(er) duplicate.

FROM SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2, Wii, 2010

“My huge cake… Never got a slice…”



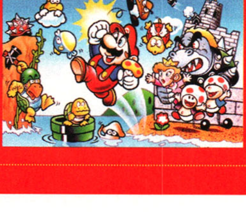
This shock of bright-red hair serves as an indication of danger to Bowser’s foes. It also suggests that even reptiles can be gingers.

This hard, shell gives Bowser ample protection from attack. The multiple spikes that protrude from its surface tell everyone nearby, “Please do not jump on me.”

When Bowser wants to keep his enemies at bay, he can easily do so by launching a deadly fireball from his gaping maw. It’s a great weapon, but it makes blowing kisses to Princess Peach extra difficult.

One might think that wading around inside Bowser’s internal organs would be a horrifying experience. His innards, however, are surprisingly clean and contain all sorts of platforms and puzzles.

Sadly, Bowser’s tail appears to be of little utility. It’s pretty much there to serve as a handle when you need to swing the big bully around.



OLLY OLLY OXEN FREE!

We all know that Bowser is a monstrous turtlelike creature, but Shigeru Miyamoto mentioned in an interview that when he originally designed the Koopa king, Bowser’s form was inspired by an ox. Bowser received his reptilian redesign when Nintendo hired famous Japanese animator Yoichi Kotabe. Together, Miyamoto and Kotabe made Bowser what he is today.

“We SHAVE around here, minions!”

SUPER PAPER MARIO, Wii, 2007

POWER QUIZ

EASY

What is the name of the weapon that can be wielded by King Mickey, Sora, Roxas, and a few other characters in the Kingdom Hearts games?

AVERAGE

In which Super NES (and Game Boy Advance) game can Mickey become a magician, a firefighter, and a mountaineer?

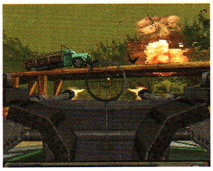
HARDCORE

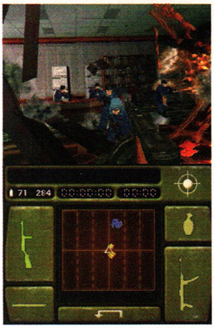
Who are the four unlockable characters in Mickey's Speedway USA for the Nintendo 64?

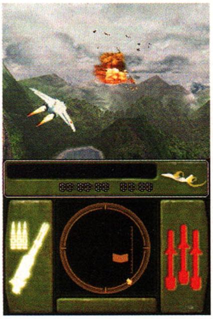
Mickey's Speedway USA

DS Reports for Duty

Call of Duty: Black Ops sneaks its way to DS.







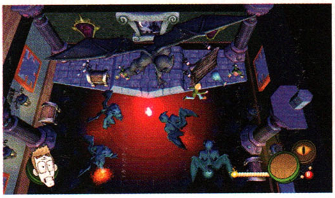
HAVING DECLARED Call of Duty "the closest thing this generation has to a *Star Wars*," Activision plans to continue blanketing the world in CoD. Next up? A Nintendo DS version of the upcoming Call of Duty: Black Ops, to be released alongside its console/PC brethren on November 9th.

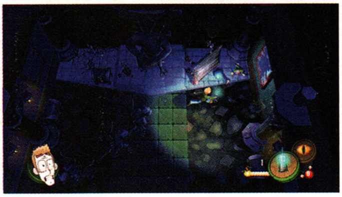
Developed by n-Space (handlers of several well-received CoD titles for DS), this "companion" to the flagship version shows heroic ambition for a handheld title, promising controllable first-person action, vehicular combat (e.g., helicopters and experimental stealth fighters), an ambitious single-player campaign, six-player online multiplayer, two-player co-op, and multiple play modes. Critically (to fans of the franchise), n-Space will also bring perks to the multiplayer engine to allow players to customize and advance their online personas. Finally, DS players will feel the undeniable urge to play one...more...round.

Other notable updates to the DS formula include an overhauled UI, a buttons-only control scheme (for those looking to put down their stylus), and Achievements that encourage repeat play of past missions. —**PATRICK C.**

Haunting Memories

Atari is scaring up a Wii version of 1982's Haunted House.





REMEMBER HAUNTED HOUSE on the Atari 2600? It was the one where players controlled a pair of blinking eyes in total darkness, searching for items in a mansion full of bats and ghosts. While ridiculously primitive by modern standards, the game is apparently fondly remembered by a lot of very old-school gamers. And so, almost 30 years later, Atari has commissioned a sequel for Wii.

You'll play as the grandchild of the original hero, who never returned from his adventure in the Graves Mansion. The new version still focuses on exploration and evasion (as opposed to combat), but now features a wider variety of light sources to cast flickering shadows and a new assortment of ghoulish beasts to avoid. Again known simply as Haunted House, the game is expected by Halloween. —**CASEY L.**

ANSWERS

EASY: Keyblade; AVERAGE: The Magical Quest Starring Mickey Mouse; HARDCORE: Huey, Dewey, Louie, and Ludwig Von Drake

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

Down By the Docks

We may never get Shenmue 3, but Sega gave a thousand lucky members of its online community the next-best thing: a limited-edition figurine of series hero Ryo Hazuki atop his famous forklift. Now Ryo's mission to stack crates and search for sailors can live on forever.

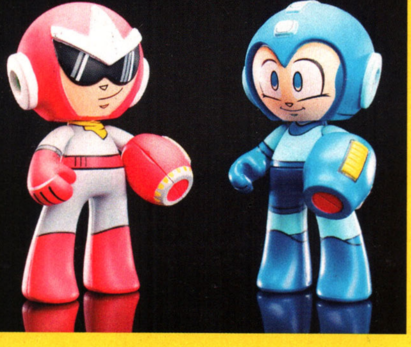
Round One—Fight!

Stoked about Street Fighter IV coming to the Nintendo 3DS system? Then pick up this first series of Neca's superposable SFIV figures, which includes Ryu, C. Viper, and Ken.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

Mega Cute

If Dr. Wily was forced to face heroes this adorable, perhaps we could finally achieve everlasting peace.



From Stars to Legends

We interview WWE wrestlers past and present about **WWE All Stars** for Wii.

ARCADEY, FAST-PACED, AND over-the-top, WWE All Stars is the latest addition to THQ's wrestling lineup. The game is all about exaggeration—both in terms of the character designs and the in-ring action—and pick-up-and-play accessibility. To further broaden the game's appeal, the character roster will be composed of both current-day WWE superstars (such as John Cena) and WWE legends from years gone by (including The Rock). WWE All Stars won't hit the Wii console until early 2011, but in the meantime we've been able to discuss this cross-generational wrestling extravaganza and much more with two WWE father-son duos: "The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes and his son "Dashing" Cody Rhodes, and "The Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase and his son Ted DiBiase. —**CHRIS H.**

"The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes & "Dashing" Cody Rhodes

NINTENDO POWER What do you think of WWE All Stars and its "legends vs. superstars" concept?

CODY I think it's a unique opportunity for fans to see a more stylized approach to WWE. WWE All Stars is like something right out of a dream—you know, the effects on the mat, the weight of the characters. It's really just a unique, artistic approach to wrestling. And it has an old-school arcade feel to it.

DUSTY What I get out of this is the opportunity to face people that you never had that opportunity in other games to face. You know, sons against dads, dads against dads, legends against dads. John Cena and The Rock—you're never going to get that match unless you play this game. And this game does have an opportunity that makes it different from the other games, where you have the "pows!" and the "bangs!" and the big moves that are overexaggerated. It's a really cool game.

Dusty, if you're going to team up with or fight against anyone (aside from your son) on the potential game roster, who would it be?

DUSTY Anybody on the roster? I think [I'd fight] John Cena. A Bionic Elbow on John Cena's noggin—see John Cena's little legs kickin', trying to kick out when I've got him covered 1-2-3. I think that'd be pretty cool. And I wouldn't mind seeing me and The Rock; you know what I mean? It's a great way to relive the past and bring it to the future.

And Cody, if you're going to team up with or fight any of the legends, other than your father, who would you go with?

CODY Even though you said I couldn't, I'd love to see just what we look like as a tag team. People ask me all the time: what happens in a Cody Rhodes/Dusty Rhodes situation? Well, I'd like to see a tag situation first, then we'll let them melt down!

So if you guys fight in the game, each playing as yourself, who's going to win?

DUSTY He's younger, faster, smarter, better-looking than I am. I got some old tricks, but I don't know if they'd work anymore.

CODY He's just being absolutely modest. The way I always put it when people ask is that Goldust would beat us both, so it doesn't really matter.

DUSTY There you go!

Given the exaggerated graphics and crazy special moves in All Stars, how would you like to see your character represented in a way that's crazier than real life?

CODY For me, of course, I always want to be bigger, and from the looks of it, everybody's going to be bigger. Everybody's going to be badder.

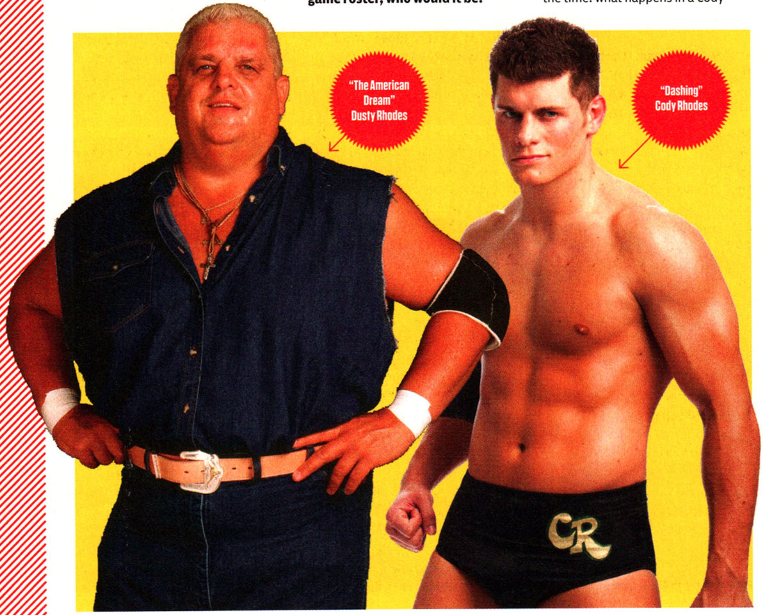
DUSTY I'd like to see myself do a dropkick; you know what I mean? And maybe a hunicanrana for me would be good. Imagine me off the top rope with a hunicanrana or a 450 splash! Maybe the 619. I'd rename it the 512, [the area code of] my hometown in Texas. Could you see The Dream hitting Rey Mysterio with a 512 and then flopping back and then me doing the hunicanrana for the finish? Crazy!

CODY No one is going to top the 512, or the phony move he just made up, the "hunicanrana." I don't even know what it entails. It could be a high-risk, top-rope, running submission for all we know, but it'll be a real treat.

Dusty, can you make sure the Shockmaster is in the game?

DUSTY Oh, the Shockmaster follows us everywhere! It's one of the greatest things since the Gobbledygooker!

So, Cody, since you're a big Zelda


"The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes
"Dashing" Cody Rhodes

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fan—what do you think of The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword?

CODY I'm not a real fan of the name, but I'm always excited. When a console Zelda's coming to town, I've gotta do it. I've only missed one professional wrestling show ever, and it was a smaller show; there were only about 40 people there, and it was in Owensboro, Kentucky, and I was at OVW [Ohio Valley Wrestling] at the time. And the reason I missed it is because I called in sick to play The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess when it came out for Wii. Literally, my Wii and my Zelda came in that day, and I called my trainer and called in sick. I knew they had plenty of talent [on hand for the show], but when it comes out it's a big thing for me.

Finally, why is it better to be a Rhodes than a DiBiase?

DUSTY That's why the DiBiases are here *tomorrow* and we're here on the main event *today*. They're cleaning up the building tomorrow, and everybody's going to be moving their stuff out—[that'll give] something for the DiBiases to do. [Laughs] No, I love Ted senior. He's real. He's on the game. The only thing I can say about Ted senior is that I wrestled him probably 400 times and I beat him 398 times. The other two times, I think I called in to play a game, said I can't come, and he won by forfeit.

"The Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase & Ted DiBiase

"The Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase
Ted DiBiase

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NINTENDO POWER What do you think of WWE All Stars and its "legends vs. superstars" concept?

TED DIBIASE I love it personally, because I was a big fan of NBA Jam. That was one of my favorite games growing up, and I remember that me and my friends used to always battle it out, and I know [one of] the guys that made that game helped with this game. So it's exciting, man. I think it'll bring in a different crowd from normal wrestling fans. I think people that aren't wrestling fans will enjoy this game.

MILLION DOLLAR MAN I agree with my son. You don't have to be a wrestling fan to enjoy the game, for that very reason. But for wrestling fans, it's an opportunity, because half the roster are legends, and the other half are present-day stars, and here's the only place where you're probably ever going to see that combination. You can pick whatever superstar today to go against whatever legend you'd like. You can do whatever you'd want to.

Million Dollar Man, if you're going to team up with or fight against anyone (aside from your son) on the potential game roster, who would it be?

MILLION DOLLAR MAN Team up with? Randy Orton. And to fight against—John Cena or Triple H. I was in the ring a couple times with Triple H when he was just a punk, before he was a full-fledged star. Undertaker. I introduced Undertaker to WWE, and I never actually had the opportunity to wrestle him when I was there, so that'd be a good guy to go against.

And Ted, if you're going to team up with or fight any of the legends, other than your father, who would you go with?

TED DIBIASE Other than my father? I'd team up with a guy I've fought against—probably Shawn Michaels. I'd like to tag with him since we've fought each other so much. I'd like to know what it's like to be on his team.

So if you guys fight in the game, each playing as yourself, who's going to win?

MILLION DOLLAR MAN I would!

TED DIBIASE Me!

Given the exaggerated graphics and crazy special moves in All Stars, how would you like to see your character represented in a way that's crazier than real life?

MILLION DOLLAR MAN Gosh, I don't even know what I could do that'd be any crazier than what they've already [put in the game]. The craziest thing I did was buy people and make them do ridiculous things. They might be able to put that in that game!

TED DIBIASE I haven't actually been able to play my own character, but I'm sure it's out of this world. I can think of some stuff I would do with my own moves. When I do my finishing move, Dream Street, you know, maybe take the guy to the top of the building and then bring him back down to the mat and it collapses the ring, and that's the end of it! It's just so cool what they've already done. It's hard to top it.

Ted, when you were younger did you play the NES or systems like that?

TED DIBIASE Yeah! I had Nintendo, Nintendo 64, Sega. I kinda stopped after I got a PS2 back in the day....

MILLION DOLLAR MAN Believe me, he had them all, because I bought them all! I'd come home off the road and I'd take him to Toys "R" Us, and he'd go, "Dad, I want that one. And I want that one and I want that one and I want that one and I want that one!" Instead of coming home with one, I'd come home with 10! So yeah, he had games in just about every way you could play them.

What were some of your favorites on the NES?

TED DIBIASE Contra. Old-school Contra. Man, you're bringing up some memories. I was a big Duck Hunt fan, because I liked to hunt. Donkey Kong. I can't even remember. It's been so long!

Say, since you fired Virgil on WWE Raw, can I be the new Virgil?

TED DIBIASE Sorry, man. Maybe. Highly unlikely, but you never know. But I doubt it.

In that case, can I just have some money instead?

MILLION DOLLAR MAN The check is in the mail!

Finally, why is it better to be a DiBiase than a Rhodes?

MILLION DOLLAR MAN Because we're better-looking—and we win!

TED DIBIASE And we're rich!

GAME FORECAST

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. Kirby's Epic Yarn
3. Donkey Kong Country Returns
4. Mario Sports Mix
5. Sonic Colors

NINTENDO DS

1. Pokémon Black Version/ Pokémon White Version
2. Super Scribblenauts
3. Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Miniland Mayhem
4. Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs
5. Sonic Colors

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario
2. Mario Kart
3. The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D
4. Kid Icarus: Uprising
5. Star Fox 64 3D

Wii		
AAA Lucha Libre Heroes of the Ring	Konami	10/10
Active Life Explorer	Namco Bandai	FALL 10
Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader? Back to School	THQ	11/10
Babysitting Mama	Majesco	HOL 10
Bakugan Battle Brawlers: Defenders of the Core	Activision	10/10
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	9/10
Battle vs. Chess	SouthPeak	10/10
Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Ben 10 Ultimate Alien: Cosmic Destruction	D3Publisher	10/10
Beyblade: Metal Fusion—Battle Fortress	Hudson	FALL 10
The Biggest Loser Challenge	THQ	11/10
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2011	Activision	FALL 10
Cabela's North American Adventures	Activision	9/10
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Activision	11/10
Camaro: Wild Ride	Storm City	11/10
Cars Toon: Mater's Tall Tales	Disney	9/10
Club Penguin Game Day!	Disney	9/10
Conduit 2	Sega	Q1 11
Create	Electronic Arts	11/10
DanceDanceRevolution	Konami	10/10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Deadliest Catch: Sea of Chaos	Crave	11/10
Deca Sports 3	Hudson	10/10
Def Jam Rapstar	Konami	10/10
Disney Channel All Star Party	Disney	10/10
Disney Sing It: Party Hits	Disney	9/10
DJ Hero 2	Activision	10/10
Donkey Kong Country Returns	Nintendo	HOL 10
Dragon's Lair Trilogy	Destineer	FALL 10
Driver San Francisco	Ubisoft	Q4 10
EA Sports Active 2	EA Sports	11/10
EA Sports Active NFL Training Camp	EA Sports	11/10
Enclave: Shadows of Twilight	TopWare	2010
Epic Mickey	Disney	FALL 10
Family Feud Decades	Ubisoft	11/10
Family Party: Fitness Fun	D3Publisher	9/10
FIFA Soccer 11	Electronic Arts	10/10
FlingSmash	Nintendo	HOL 10
Flip's Twisted World	Majesco	9/10
GoldenEye 007	Activision	11/10
Gormiti: The Lords of Nature!	Konami	9/10
Grease: The Game	505	9/10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	Majesco	9/10
The Grinder	TBA	TBA
Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock	Activision	9/10
Hard Grip: The Climbing Game	TBA	TBA
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	11/10
Hasbro Family Game Night 3	Electronic Arts	10/10
Haunted House	Atari	9/10
Heathcliff: The Fast and the Furriest	Storm City	11/10
Hollywood Squares	Ubisoft	10/10
Honda Fever	Storm City	10/10
Jeopardy!	THQ	11/10
Jewel Quest Trilogy	GameMill	10/10
Just Dance 2	Ubisoft	10/10
Karaoke Revolution Glee	Konami	FALL 10
Kidz Bop Dance Party! The Video Game	D3Publisher	9/10
Kirby's Epic Yarn	Nintendo	FALL 10
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole	Warner Bros.	9/10
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	Nintendo	2011
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	Q4 10
Littlest Pet Shop 3 Biggest Stars	Electronic Arts	10/10
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	9/10
Lost in Shadow	Hudson	1/11
Man vs. Wild	Crave	11/10
Mario Sports Mix	Nintendo	2011
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	FALL 10
Megamind: Mega Team Unite	THQ	11/10
Michael Jackson: The Experience	Ubisoft	11/10
Monopoly Streets	Electronic Arts	10/10
Monster Jam 2011	Activision	11/10
Mr. T	TBA	TBA
MySims SkyHeroes	Electronic Arts	9/10
NBA Jam	EA Sports	10/10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
Nerf 2: N-Strike Elite	Electronic Arts	FALL 10
New Carnival Games	2K Play	9/10
Nickelodeon Fit	2K Play	11/10
Once Upon a Time	Storm City	9/10
Oops! Prank Party	Hudson	10/10
Pac-Man Party	Namco Bandai	FALL 10
Pheasants Forever: Wingshooter	GameMill	10/10
PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure	Nintendo	HOL 10
Pro Evolution Soccer 2011	Konami	11/10
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rapala Pro Bass Fishing	Activision	FALL 10
Raving Rabbids Travel in Time	Ubisoft	11/10
Rock Band 3	MTV Games	10/10
Rock of the Dead	Conspiracy	10/10
Samurai Warriors 3	Nintendo	9/10
Scooby-Doo! and the Spooky Swamp	Warner Bros.	9/10
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	Capcom	10/10
Sesame Street: Cookie's Counting Carnival	Warner Bros.	10/10
Sesame Street: Elmo's A-to-Zoo Adventure	Warner Bros.	10/10
Shaun White Skateboarding	Ubisoft	9/10
Sid Meier's Pirates!	2K	FALL 10
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	10/10
Sky Pirates of Neo Terra	Aspyr	TBA
Sled Shred	SouthPeak	Q4 10
Sonic Colors	Sega	HOL 10
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	Activision	9/10
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	LucasArts	10/10
Stratusphere	TBA	TBA
Swords	Majesco	9/10
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	3/11
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	Ubisoft	11/10
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	Disney	HOL 10
Truth or Lies	THQ	9/10
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	11/10
Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?	Ubisoft	10/10
Wii Party	Nintendo	FALL 10
WWE All Stars	THQ	2011
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	THQ	10/10
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	HOL 10
Zhu Zhu Pets: Wild Bunch	Activision	10/10
Zumba Fitness	Majesco	10/10
NINTENDO DS		
Alpha & Omega	Storm City	9/10
Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	THQ	11/10
Art Academy	Nintendo	10/10
Atari's Greatest Hits Vol. 1	Atari	11/10
Bakugan Battle Brawlers: Defenders of the Core	Activision	10/10
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	9/10

SEGA
THOR
THE VIDEO GAME
MARVEL
www.marvel.com

RED TEXT = TITLES ADDED THIS MONTH.

* TENTATIVE TITLE

NOTE: RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE.

Battle vs. Chess	SouthPeak	10/10
Beastly Frantic Foto	Storm City	Q1 11
Ben 10 Ultimate Alien: Cosmic Destruction	D3Publisher	10/10
Beyblade: Metal Fusion	Hudson	FALL 10
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts 2011	Activision	FALL 10
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Activision	11/10
Camaro Wild Ride	Storm City	11/10
Crafting Mama	Majesco	10/10
de Blob: The Underground	THQ	SPR 11
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Disney Fairies: Tinker Bell and the Great Fairy Rescue	Disney	9/10
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dora the Explorer: Dora's Cooking Club	2K Play	11/10
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie	Square Enix	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Chain Reaction	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Critical Mass	Deep Silver	TBA
Duke Nukem Trilogy: Proving Grounds	Deep Silver	TBA
Easy Piano	Valcon	2010
Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City	Atlus	9/10
FIFA Soccer 11	Electronic Arts	9/10
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light	Square Enix	10/10
Frantic Foto: Heathcliff Comic Edition	Storm City	10/10
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove	Natsume	Q4 10
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	Capcom	11/10
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	TBA	TBA
Go Diego Go Mega Bloks Build and Rescue	2K Play	11/10
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	Nintendo	HOL 10
GoldenEye 007	Activision	11/10
Gormiti: The Lords of Nature!	Konami	9/10
Grease	505	9/10
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	Warner Bros.	Q3 11
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	Electronic Arts	11/10
Hidden Mysteries: Salem Witches	GameMill	9/10
Honda Fever	Storm City	10/10
House, M.D.	Legacy	9/10
Imagine Fashion Stylist	Ubisoft	11/10
Imagine Resort Owner	Ubisoft	2010
Intellivision Lives!	Virtual Play	9/10
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	Activision	11/10
Jeopardy!	THQ	11/10
Jewel Master: Cradle of Athena	Storm City	10/10
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	Square Enix	TBA
Kung Zhu	Activision	10/10
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole	Warner Bros.	9/10
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	Q4 10
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Blue Team	Electronic Arts	10/10
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Pink Team	Electronic Arts	10/10
Littlest Pet Shop 3: Biggest Stars—Purple Team	Electronic Arts	10/10
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	Warner Bros.	9/10
Lufia: Curse of the Sinistrals	Natsume	10/10
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Miniland Mayhem	Nintendo	HOL 10
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	FALL 10
Megamind: The Blue Defender	THQ	11/10
Michael Jackson: The Experience	Ubisoft	11/10
Monopoly Streets	Electronic Arts	10/10
Monster Jam 2011	Activision	11/10
Monster Tale	Majesco	12/10
My Baby 3	Majesco	10/10
MySims SkyHeroes	Electronic Arts	9/10
NCIS	Ubisoft	2011
New Carnival Games	2K Play	9/10
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	Aksys	2010
Okamiden	Capcom	3/11
Petz Fantasy	Ubisoft	HOL 10
Petz Nursery 2	Ubisoft	11/10
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Pokémon Black Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Pokémon White Version	Nintendo	SPR 11
Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs	Nintendo	FALL 10
Professor Layton and the Unwound Future	Nintendo	9/10
Puzzle Overload	Telegames	Q4 10
Rapala Pro Bass Fishing	Activision	FALL 10
Rock Band 3	MTV	10/10
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	Natsume	FALL 10
Scooby Doo! and the Spooky Swamp	Warner Bros.	9/10
Scripps Spelling Bee	THQ	9/10
Sesame Street: Cookie's Counting Carnival	Warner Bros.	10/10
Sesame Street: Elmo's A-to-Zoo Adventure	Warner Bros.	10/10
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	10/10
Solitaire Overload Plus	Telegames	Q3 10
Sonic Colors	Sega	FALL 10
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	Activision	9/10
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	LucasArts	10/10
Style Lab Fashion Design	Ubisoft	FALL 10
Super Scribblenauts	Warner Bros.	10/10
Thor: The Video Game	Sega	2011
Wheel of Fortune	THQ	11/10
Who Wants to Be a Millionaire	Ubisoft	10/10
Yogi Bear: The Video Game	D3Publisher	HOL 10
Zhu Zhu Pets: Wild Bunch	Activision	10/10

NINTENDO 3DS

Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Asphalt GT	Gameloft	TBA
Assassin's Creed Lost Legacy	Ubisoft	TBA
Baseball*	Konami	TBA
Batman*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Battle of Giants: Dinosaur Strike	Ubisoft	TBA
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
Bokujyoumonogatari 3D*	Marvelous	TBA
Bomberman*	Hudson	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Carnival Games*	Take-Two	TBA
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
cubic ninja	AQ	TBA
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dead or Alive 3D*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Deca Sports*	Hudson	TBA
DJ Hero 3D	Activision	TBA
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Driver Renegade	Ubisoft	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Face Racers: Photo Finish	Majesco	TBA
FIFA Soccer*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Frogger*	Konami	TBA
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Hollywood '61*	Ubisoft	TBA
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	TBA
Kingdom Hearts 3DS*	Square Enix	TBA
Kororinpa*	Hudson	TBA
Kung Fu Panda Kaboom of Doom	THQ	TBA
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	Nintendo	TBA
LEGO*	Warner Bros.	TBA
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Madden NFL*	Electronic Arts	TBA
Mario Kart*	Nintendo	TBA
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	TBA
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	Konami	TBA
Naruto Shippuden Action	Tomy	TBA
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Nintendogs + Cats	Nintendo	TBA
Pac-Man & Galaga*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
The Penguins of Madagascar	THQ	TBA
PilotWings Resort	Nintendo	TBA
Pro Evolution Soccer*	Konami	TBA
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puss N Boots	THQ	TBA
Resident Evil Revelations	Capcom	TBA
Ridge Racer*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Saints Row: Drive-By	THQ	TBA
Samurai Warriors 3D*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor*	Atlus	TBA
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
The Sims 3	Electronic Arts	TBA
Sonic*	Sega	TBA
Star Fox 64 3D	Nintendo	TBA
Steel Diver	Nintendo	TBA
Super Monkey Ball*	Sega	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition*	Capcom	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubisoft	TBA
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	TBA
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
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QUICKPICK FARMER
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STEAMWORLD TOWER DEFENSE

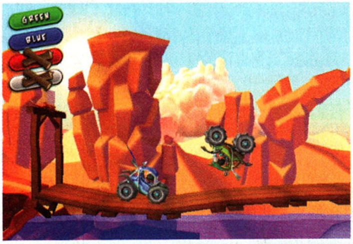
Wild Wheels

Flip, bounce, and boost your way to the finish line in MotoHeroz, a platforming/racing hybrid for WiiWare.

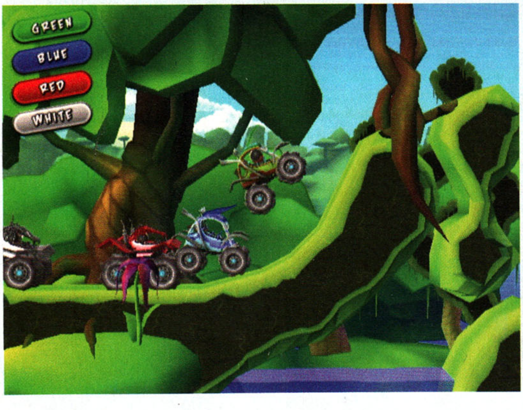
MOTOHEROZ IS MORE than just a racing game. Yes, you're in a vehicle, and yes, you're competing against other drivers in an attempt to get to the goal first, but MotoHeroz has as much in common with platformers as it does with traditional racing titles. Not only does the game utilize a 2D side-scrolling perspective, but it features crazy power-ups, a vibrant art style, and outrageous level designs. In short, it's unlike pretty much anything else in the racing genre.

Developed by Finland-based RedLynx, MotoHeroz lets you control one of four characters—heroic Gene McQuick, lovely Peri Sprite, villainous Spiderleg Larssun, or Handsome Hans the mechanic—and compete against the others in more than 100 levels spanning four environments (forest, arctic, desert, and a yet-to-be-revealed fourth setting), each full of jumps, loops, and other interactive elements. The controls are simple; you hold the Wii Remote controller sideways, and press the 2 Button to accelerate, the 1 Button to brake (or go into reverse), and the A Button to activate power-ups (such as a rocket boost, a parachute, a spring jump, and more). The Control Pad enables you to make the vehicle lean, and shaking the remote enables you to right your vehicle if it gets flipped over.

But there's more to the game than pick-up-and-play controls and zany action; the experience is held together by a robust, realistic physics engine that keeps the game authentic and varied. (A similar physics engine powered RedLynx's Xbox Live Arcade hit Trials HD.)



With four players vying for first place, the action can get pretty crazy. Just don't fall too far behind, or you'll get bumped from the race!



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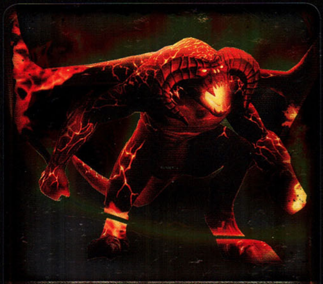

BALROG

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PRODUCTS RANGE FROM EVERYONE 10+ TO TEEN

E-T Fantasy Violence

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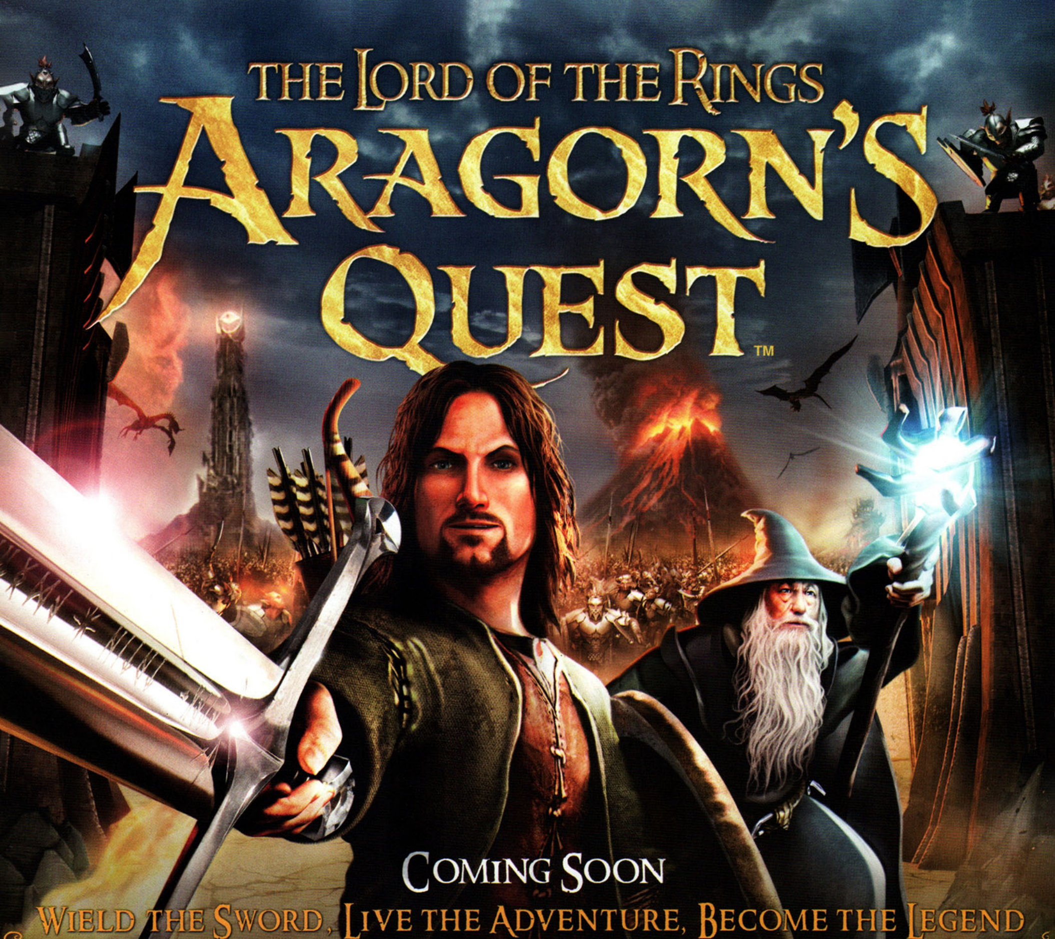
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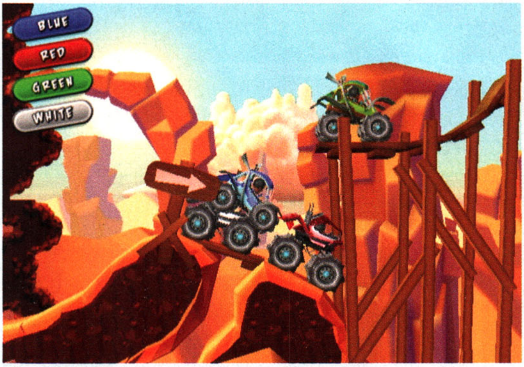
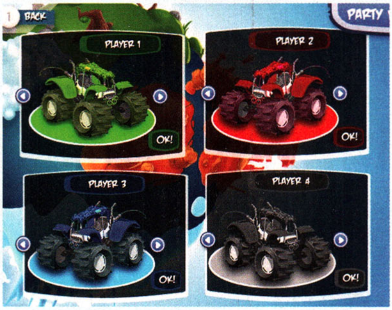


[Left] Do you want to take the high road or the low road? Multiple routes through the courses will help decide the winner.



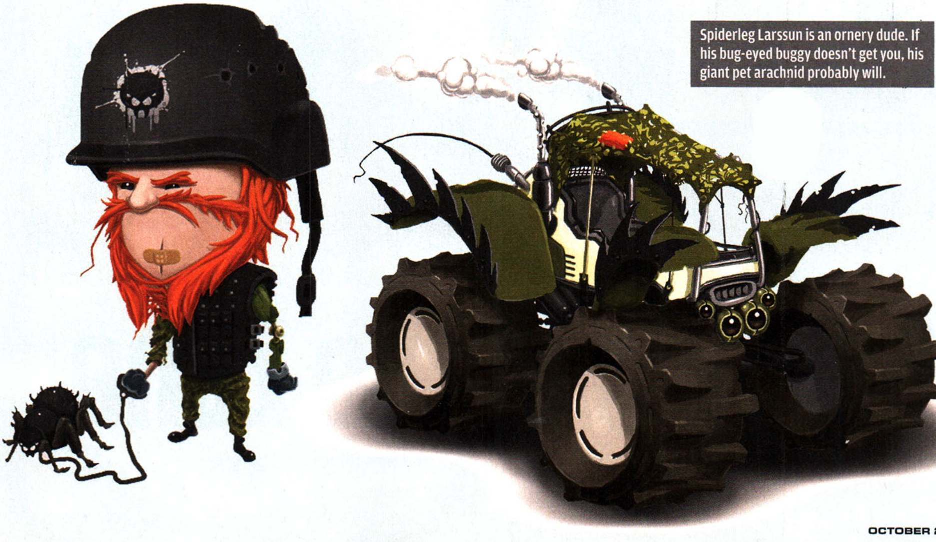
"Realistic physics provide endless possibilities for the game," explains lead designer Antti Ilvessuo (who's also RedLynx's creative director). "When the controlling and driving is based on realistic physics, you can always improve your driving, as you do in the real world. There is no upper limit to how good you can become.... By including realistic physics, the environment also becomes a lot more interactive and unpredictable in a hurry, and so more fun. For example, once a couple cars start moving through the same pile of obstacles, bouncing off each other and the other 3D objects, using power-ups, things quickly become unpredictable and exciting."

And the realistic physics don't apply to just your vehicle; they also apply to environmental objects such as water, boxes, and rolling logs, and the result is that no two level playthroughs will be exactly the same. The physics also come into play in some unusual situations—in one level you ride a swinging ski lift while trying to knock off other vehicles, and in other stages you may find yourself driving on top of an opponent's vehicle if you enter a narrow tunnel at the same time.

The game features numerous modes, as well. If you're playing solo, you can enjoy a deep Story mode in which youthful upstart Gene McQuick attempts to defeat evil champion-apparent Spiderleg Larssun in the Great World Race. As you play through the levels, you'll encounter obstacles unique to each environment (such as wooden bridges and floating boards in the forest stages, and a beach ball in the desert), and discover plentiful coins and ancestor spirits to collect. Eventually you'll even earn a helicopter rotor and a submarine propeller that enable you to more fully explore your surroundings.

On the other hand, if you want to compete against other humans, up to four players can face off in Party Rally mode, or you can download and race against ghost data in Time Attack mode. Time Attack mode also allows you to customize your ride (including the color of your vehicle, helmet, and uniform) using coins you've acquired, so when other players download your data, they'll see a vehicle that's distinctly yours. Better yet, you'll be able to download new Time Attack courses on a daily basis, giving you even more opportunities to vie for the number-one position on the global leaderboards.

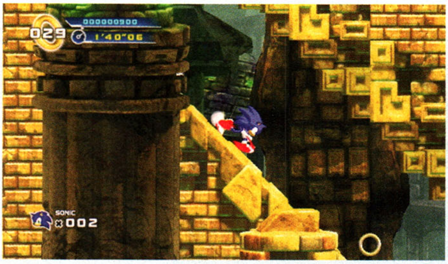
You'll have to wait a few months before you rev up your engine—the game isn't scheduled to be completed until the end of this year or early 2011—but that wait should be worth it. MotoHeroz could very well be one of the most unique and robust WiiWare offerings yet. **—CHRIS H.**

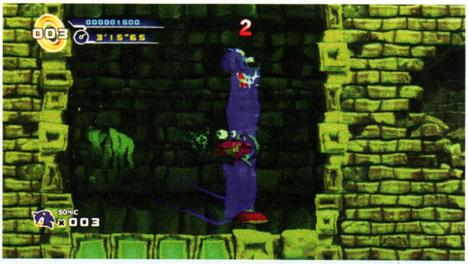


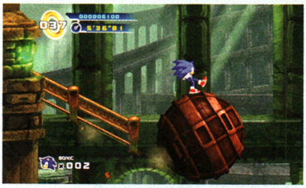
Spiderleg Larssun is an ornery dude. If his bug-eyed buggy doesn't get you, his giant pet arachnid probably will.

Sonic's in the Zone

Shift into high gear with new levels and new details on Sonic the Hedgehog 4 for WiiWare.







TO SAY THAT Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode I is one of the most anticipated games for WiiWare is an understatement. It isn't just one of the most visually impressive downloadable games we've ever seen; it's the game that Sonic the Hedgehog fans have been awaiting for nearly 15 years. From the 2D side-scrolling action to the music to the focus on Sonic as the sole playable character, Sonic 4 is being designed to take the Blue Blur back to his roots and deliver the old-school high-speed platforming fun that made Sonic a household name in the first place.

When Sega first unveiled the title a few months ago, the company focused on the stages that comprise the Splash Hill Zone—a traditional Sonic opening level complete with green hills, rushing waterfalls, and that distinctively Sonic checkerboard aesthetic. Even the boss fight against Dr. Robotnik (aka Dr. Eggman) is a variation on the mustachioed villain's first appearance. Now Sega has lifted the curtain on two of the game's other zones (each of which contains three acts plus a boss fight).

As you might guess from its name, the Lost Labyrinth Zone is heavily inspired by the Labyrinth Zone from the original Sonic the Hedgehog game. Many of the elements made famous by those levels are present here, including endlessly looping waterfall mazes, pulley-based moving platforms, retracting spikes, and underwater segments that require you to grab air bubbles before you run out of oxygen. Familiar enemies—such as the drill-equipped Burrowbots (that pop out of the ground at the least-convenient times) and the well-defended Star Pointers—are back, too. The boss fight is also an homage to classic Sonic; you must chase Robotnik through a watery, trap-laden maze before giving the villain a proper whuppin'.

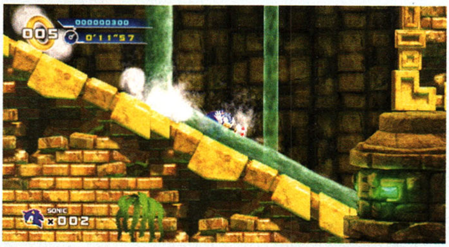
But the Lost Labyrinth features new components, as well, such as huge orbs that you must balance upon as they roll along specially designed tracks, and iron spheres that fall from the sky and sometimes give chase, Indiana Jones-style. At one point, you must even contend with rising water and a moving wall that threatens to squash Sonic flat! One challenge you won't face, however, is a mine-cart level. Though it appeared in footage leaked onto the Internet a few months ago, the stage has been removed from the final game; in its place will be a pitch-black level in which Sonic will use a torch to light sconces and thus overcome the many obstacles before him.

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the Lost Labyrinth's ancient ruins is the futuristic Mad Gear Zone. Although you can play the game's four main zones in any order, the Mad Gear Zone is clearly cut from the same cloth as the end-of-game stages in classic Sonic titles. You know the ones—the hard-edged industrial stages full of steampunk-style machinery that practically screams you're on the bad guys' home turf.

The Mad Gear Zone is full of the usual loops and momentum-based gameplay, but it adds pneumatic transportation tubes, steam geysers that boost you to new parts of the level, and giant pistons that threaten to crush you or knock you onto spikes. By running atop giant cogs, you'll make them spin along tracks, not only taking you to new parts of the level but at times opening bulky metal doors to enable you to proceed.

The Mad Gear Zone's third act is especially tough; it takes the crushing-wall concept from the Lost Labyrinth Zone and kicks the intensity level up to maximum. With an enormous, screen-filling drill machine nipping at your heels, you must leap spikes, hit switches, and dodge momentum-reversing blasts in one of the craziest Sonic stages we've ever witnessed. If you survive long enough to make it to the zone's boss, you'll face off against Dr. Robotnik's latest contraption. The encounter isn't too hard at first; Robotnik's ship is surrounded by bouncy facsimiles of the doctor, and each time you bash the vehicle, he launches one of the facsimiles toward you. If you hit the ship enough times, Robotnik tries to flee, resulting in a high-speed second battle in which you must catch up to him and clobber him while dodging a variety of facsimile-based attacks.

Once you beat the bosses of all four initial zones (the fourth region is the Casino Street Zone, but Sega hasn't provided details as of press time) you'll unlock the final area, where you'll face the game's ultimate challenges. But even then the experience isn't necessarily over; if you conquer all of the bonus stages and collect all the Chaos Emeralds, you'll get to witness a special scene that ties directly into Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode II. Sega would send Robotnik's entire army after us if we spoiled the surprise, but rest assured: Sonic the Hedgehog fans will be very, very happy. **—CHRIS H.**



[Above] The Lost Labyrinth Zone: more fun than your local waterslide.

The NeoGeo Lives

Virtual Console helps celebrate 20 years of SNK's monster gaming machine.

SNK
NEO·GEO
MAX 330 MEGA
PRO-GEAR SPEC
ADVANCED ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
RESET
POWER
ON–OFF
MEMORY CARD IN

IN THE EARLY '90S, a small software company called SNK had an idea: they were going to make their own video game console. It was going to be the most powerful machine on the market. It was going to have literally arcade-perfect games. It was going to cost about $650 at launch (more than $1,000 in 2010 money).

A lot of people would say SNK was crazy, and they may very well have been right. But the NeoGeo would become the longest-lived platform in console-gaming history. (The first NeoGeo game was released in 1990, and the last dropped in 2004.)

To celebrate the more than 20 years since the NeoGeo's debut, we're taking a look back at the system's history, and revisiting 10 of its most significant games (all of which are available for download on the Wii system's Virtual Console). As far as crazy ideas go, the NeoGeo did pretty well for itself.

ANYBODY'S GAME. OR NOT.

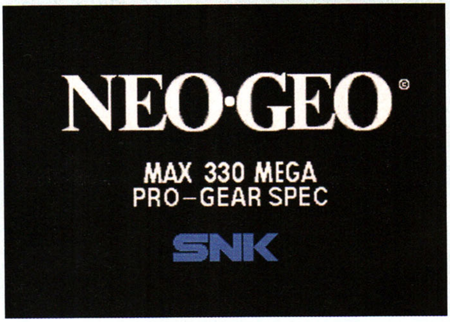
To understand why the NeoGeo came into being in the first place, you have to remember that in 1990, the gaming market seemed very much up for grabs. Nintendo's once-mighty NES was looking long in the tooth. Sega and NEC had only just taken their first steps into the 16-bit realm. The Super NES was still hype and rumor. Arcades were in a lull, waiting for the 2D-fighter boom to start in 1991.

At times like those, a crazy idea might seem like it has a chance of succeeding. The NeoGeo had a great selling point, too—you could play the exact same games at home as you could in arcades. The NeoGeo was, of course, available as a home console called the AES (Advanced Entertainment System), but there was also an arcade-cabinet version

1UP 1600 HI 50000

1P 500
HIGH 31200
PRESS 2P BUTTON

[Below] The NeoGeo startup screen makes as little sense today as it did in 1990.



NEO·GEO ©

MAX 330 MEGA
PRO–GEAR SPEC

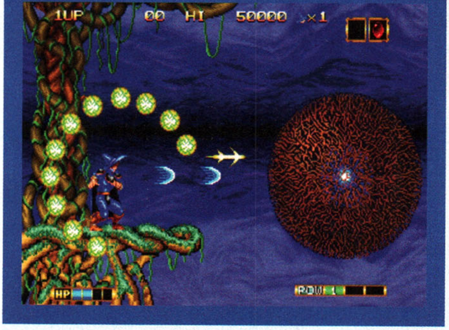
SNK

PHOTO BY ANDREA KRAUSE AND JEFF KATIN

MAGICIAN LORD

DEVELOPER: **Alpha Denshi** RELEASE: **1990**

This was the stuff in 1990—a meaty action-platformer with gigantic sprites, great-looking backgrounds, and long branching levels. History hasn't been entirely kind to Magician Lord, though, mainly because by modern standards it is kick-you-in-the-teeth crazy hard. (A lot of early Neo games betray their arcade roots with an unreasonably cruel difficulty level.) We can still enjoy the soundtrack, though, and the digitized voice samples are quite entertaining, having been recorded in a language that sounds almost, if not quite, like English.



85
PUSH START
LEVEL-4
CREDITS 03

TIME
27
LEVEL-4
CREDITS 08

1P- 164306
TIME
DUCK KING
PUSH START
CREDITS 06

called the MVS (Multi Video System). The arcade-cabinet games were exactly the same as the home versions—the same chips in a different casing. This was a very big deal in those days. Typically, the gap between arcade and console technology was huge. NeoGeo launch games such as Magician Lord and Baseball Stars Professional looked as good as anything in the arcades of the day, though. Rival consoles couldn't come close. When the Neo got rolling in the mid '90s, it could even outdo the Sega Saturn and the PlayStation, at least in the 2D-graphics arena.

Sadly, perfection—and the boatload of ROM inside each hefty NeoGeo cartridge—had a price. It wasn't necessarily the $650 tag on the hardware that held back the AES; it was the $250 or $300 you had to pay for each new game. That was a lot to ask, especially since many early Neo titles were quarter-munching shooters and beat-'em-ups. They looked gorgeous, but if the appeal still wore off after 45 minutes or so...ouch.

In short, SNK's home system failed to set the world on fire. In the arcades, though, the NeoGeo started a revolution.

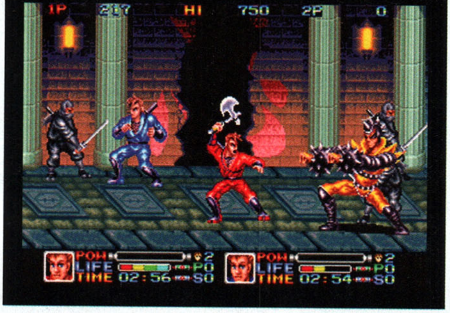
MONEY CHANGES EVERYTHING

The NeoGeo debuted a year before Capcom launched Street Fighter II, putting it in a perfect position to ride the wave of the arcade boom. Arcade operators quickly discovered that the Neo was a money-making machine. Like the AES, the MVS accepted cartridge-based games—but it could store up to six cartridges at once, depending on the model. Keeping multiple games in a single cabinet and swapping them out regularly meant that one chunk of space on the arcade floor could pull in many more quarters than it used to. New NeoGeo cartridges were

NINJA COMBAT

DEVELOPER: **Alpha Denshi** RELEASE: **1990**

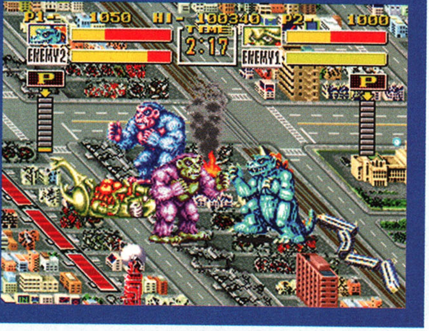
The prototype for a fistful of side-scrolling beat-'em-ups that graced the NeoGeo in its early days, Ninja Combat dished out a fun riff on the Double Dragon/Final Fight formula: giant characters, detailed stages, and a fairly weird arsenal of allegedly ninja-themed weaponry. The giant battle-ax seems a little bit out there, but the big, spiked, steel bat is in fact authentically Japanese. It's called a *kanabo* or *tetsubo*, often used to bash in heads during the grand old days of the samurai.



KING OF THE MONSTERS

DEVELOPER: **SNK** RELEASE: **1991**

Play a couple of times, and you'll figure it out—this is basically an old-school pro-wrestling game. It just happens to star gigantic monsters, feature jet planes instead of folding chairs as foreign objects, and have a "ring" set up by the energy-zap guns of the Earth Defense Force. It's not necessarily one of the best early Neo releases, but the novelty of giant monster battles (plus the awesome graphics and interactive stages) ate a lot of quarters back in the day.



1P 1500 TOP 218200 PUSH
START BUTTON

THE WISH LIST

Virtual Console hosts a fine NeoGeo lineup, but it's missing a few essential entries. A few more shooters, such as the stylish Last Resort or the maniacally challenging Pulstar, would be excellent additions. Some later entries in the King of Fighters series would be appreciated, too, especially the beloved '98 edition. Most of all, though, Wii fighting fans deserve Garou: Mark of the Wolves, the 1999 rebirth of the Fatal Fury series that's far and away the best head-to-head fighter SNK ever made. It's a little bit hefty in the disc-space department, but there must be a way to get around that.

less costly than a whole new piece of stand-alone hardware, too.

Arcades kept the Neo alive. Hardcore coin-op gamers loved 2D fighters such as Fatal Fury, Samurai Shodown, and The King of Fighters, while shooters and sports games drew casual players. Arcade operators raked in the profits. The hardware design was so economically brilliant that nearly every other company in the business eventually copied it by introducing either an arcade board based on a console or a system featuring swappable games.

THE LONG WAY DOWN

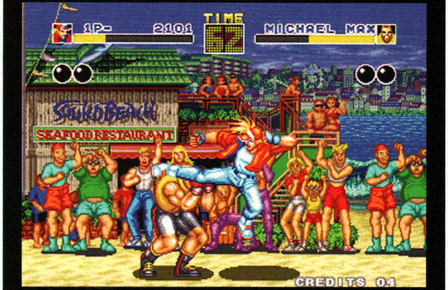
Meanwhile, a small cult of fans stuck with the NeoGeo home console. After all, in the 32-bit generation and beyond, they still had the only true arcade-perfect games. It wasn't long before home-system cartridges were almost impossible to find. Consumers had to buy them through a tiny handful of mail-order outfits most AES games were limited to a single production run. This made a few titles into major collector's items—when Metal Slug became a surprise success, the value of the AES cart hit the ceiling.

All good things come to an end. As a new decade dawned, SNK went on a corporate roller-coaster

FATAL FURY

DEVELOPER: **SNK** RELEASE: **1991**

Fatal Fury is the first 2D one-on-one fighting game SNK released in the wake of the Street Fighter boom, and one that's still unique in some interesting ways. Fatal Fury used two planes of gameplay (just like an early Neo action game, Top Hunter); there's a layer of strategy involved in launching your fighter into and out of the background. The game's heroes became some of the most enduring mascots on the NeoGeo—protagonist Terry Bogard appeared in more than 15 NeoGeo fighters. When Garou: Mark of the Wolves completely remade the Fatal Fury series, Terry was the only member of the classic cast to stick around.

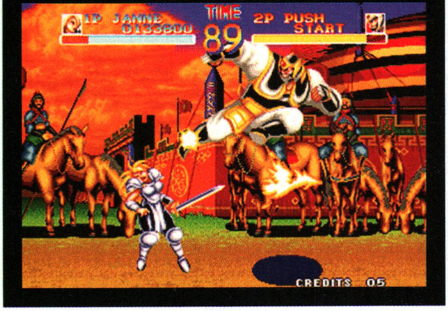


Fatal Fury is one of the most successful NeoGeo franchises. In addition to games, the property has spawned action figures and anime movies.

WORLD HEROES

DEVELOPER: **Alpha Denshi** RELEASE: **1992**

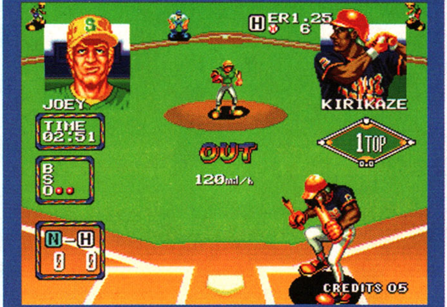
Alpha Denshi took a bit to catch up with the 2D-fighter craze, but its first entry in the genre was more than stylish enough. World Heroes stars a cast of sorta-historical figures: a ringer for the mad Russian priest Rasputin, a Mongolian warlord named Jengis Carn, and...well, the robot in a quasi-Nazi uniform kind of breaks the theme. One way or the other, it's colorful goofy fun. The sequels aren't bad either, although World Heroes 2 has the dubious distinction of featuring the cheapest fighting-game boss ever.



BASEBALL STARS 2

DEVELOPER **SNK** RELEASE **1992**

8-bit veterans remember the popular NES version of Baseball Stars, which is still an all-time classic, but nothing on any other console could match the graphics in the NeoGeo sequels. Baseball Stars 2 (the sequel to Baseball Stars Professional, one of the NeoGeo's launch games) added two leagues' worth of teams, even bigger character sprites, stylish comic-book cut-scenes to mark big events in midgame, and extra strategy in the form of special power-up options. It's one of the best baseball games to ever grace the arcades.

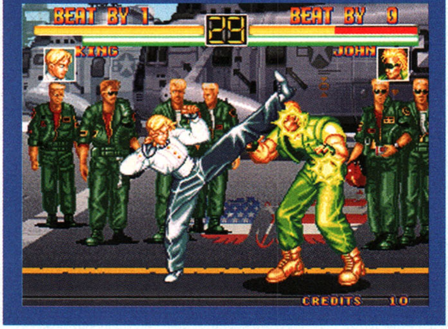


Wimpy MLB players are no match for the Tokyo Ninjas. Not only are they stealthy, but they can snap bats in half as if they were twigs.

ART OF FIGHTING

DEVELOPER: **SNK** RELEASE: **1992**

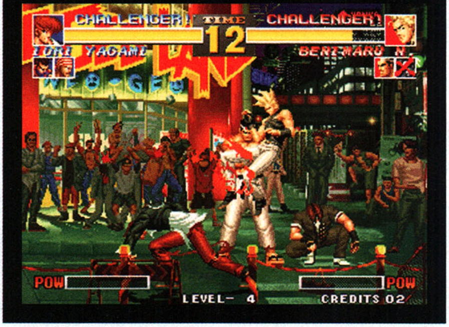
One of SNK's earliest fighting games, Art of Fighting is famous for massive character sprites, a cool scaling perspective, and the joking feud it started with Capcom. Ryo Sakazaki and Robert Garcia, the two playable characters in Art of Fighting's story mode, were the inspiration behind the legendary Dan Hibiki (from Street Fighter Alpha) who was created to have a laugh at the expense of this game's less-than-original character design. Luckily it was all in fun, and SNK's artists would soon turn it around with a string of innovative creations.



THE KING OF FIGHTERS '95

DEVELOPER: **SNK** RELEASE: **1995**

The King of Fighters debuted with the '94 edition, but this sequel proved that the series had real staying power. The Team Edit feature let players pick and choose their own three-man crew of fighters, and the game benefited from a year's worth of balance tuning (although a few members of the cast are still sorta incredibly powerful). '95 also showed off SNK's burgeoning character-design talents, introducing the classic sneer of Iori Yagami and a creepy cyborg makeover for Omega Rugal, who's one of the coolest (and toughest) final bosses we've ever faced.



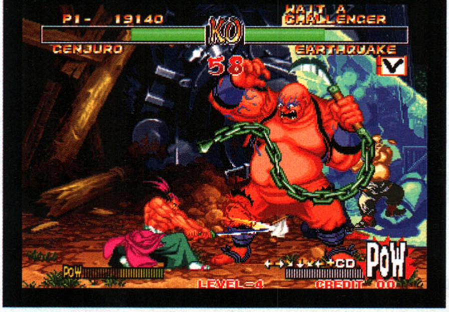
ride—bought out, bankrupted, split up, sold off, bought again, and revived as something not quite what it used to be. Beloved as it was by fans, the NeoGeo hardware was a dinosaur. In 2004 the last AES game (Samurai Shodown V Special, for you trivia buffs) came and went, and the NeoGeo said a quiet goodbye.

Its legacy lives on all over the gaming world, though, especially on the Virtual Console, where you can purchase several NeoGeo classics for roughly three percent of their original price. The march of technology may finally have killed the NeoGeo, but it's also made sure that the memory of SNK's crazy idea will never die. **—DAVID S.**

SAMURAI SHODOWN II

DEVELOPER: **SNK** RELEASE: **1994**

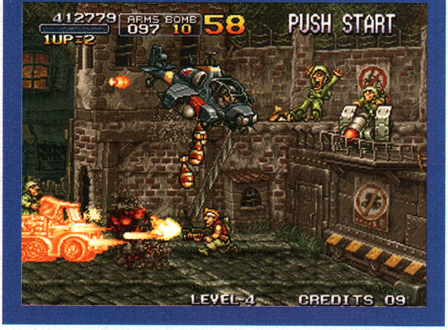
Samurai Shodown has a long and storied history. The last game in the original Samurai Shodown series was also the last game on the NeoGeo. The franchise might have peaked with this title, though: a bloody, beautifully animated fighter with a classic cast of characters. Nobody would ever accuse it of being perfectly balanced (Ukyo Tachibana is a legend in the annals of overpowered fighters), but it still manages to be great fun for head-to-head competition, and even now it's nothing less than stunning to look at.



METAL SLUG

DEVELOPER: **Nazca** RELEASE: **1996**

Coming as it did from an unheralded developer (formed by a handful of ex-Irem personnel, Nazca made only two games under that name), nobody knew what to make of this one until it finally hit the arcades. Then we knew: it was one of the greatest side-scrolling shooters anybody had ever seen. Metal Slug featured nonstop action, incredibly detailed 2D sprite animation, and memorably weird gallows humor. Almost 15 years later, there still isn't much to touch it—except, perhaps, for Metal Slug 3.



EVALUATION STATION

WiiWare

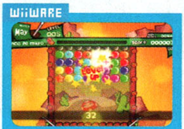
AQUASPACE

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
Wii POINTS: **600**

First things first: AquaSpace is not a game. That said, digital-aquarium enthusiasts have a new sim to wrap their fins around (My Aquarium was here first). Various fish species in beautifully rendered customizable tanks are on offer. Interactivity is in short supply—we're talking feeding and swimming—but information is not; a fish encyclopedia offers perhaps too much info. Still, the value proposition is a bit dicey; do we really want aquariums in our TVs? —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



BALLOON POP FESTIVAL

PUBLISHER: **UFO INTERACTIVE**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
Wii POINTS: **800**

Balloon Pop Festival is a fairly generic "match the colored bubbles" puzzle game. Although the core gameplay is simple, specific rules are left unexplained, leading to confusion. You're given extreme freedom when moving bubbles around the playing field, making it easy to set up massive combos. The game compensates for this by sending tons more bubbles your way—often so many that the game immediately ends. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWare

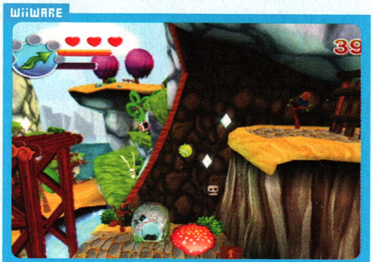
CRUISE PARTY

PUBLISHER: **ENJOY GAMING**
GENRE: **GAMBLING**
Wii POINTS: **800**

The *cruise* part of Cruise Party is just framing for a collection of four gambling games. Competition for up to four players adds timers and extra rules. Roulette and blackjack are successful, but a little wonky. (You can't bet on the lines in roulette, for example.) The slot machine forces each player to bet on a different line, and video poker is stripped down to the point of not really being poker at all. It's a mixed bag that is more fun for a group than for a single player. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



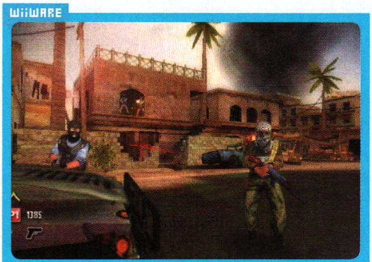
FURRY LEGENDS

PUBLISHER: **GAMELION** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

A side-scrolling platformer with attractive graphics, cute characters, and a lot of moving parts, Furry Legends has all the makings of a good game. Unfortunately, your Furball's basic attack is far too complex. To make the fuzzy little guy fly at an approaching Squarie, you have to hold the Z Button (freezing your character in place), indicate the direction of the attack with the Control Stick, then shake the Wii Remote. By the time you can execute the attack, the enemy likely has moved. The game offers loads of interesting, physics-based puzzles, but it's just not fun when something that should be as simple as jumping up to hit a big button on a wall feels like a puzzle due to a cumbersome control scheme. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare



HEAVY FIRE: SPECIAL OPERATIONS

PUBLISHER: **TEYON** GENRE: **SHOOTER** Wii POINTS: **500**

Heavy Fire: Special Operations has a slight identity crisis. On one hand, it features realistic weapons, authentic (and destructible) environments, and a believable modern-day story that's brought to life through excellent sound and some of the best polygonal visuals on WiiWare. The gameplay, on the other hand, is pure arcade shooting gallery—more *G.I. Joe* than *Black Hawk Down*. And the bad guys make Cobra troops look like sharpshooters; I got through half the game on my first try without being injured. Fortunately, the difficulty evens out toward the end, since you can take only three hits. It all adds up to a nicely polished shooter with a low price point. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

WiiWare

HOOPWORLD

PUBLISHER: **VIRTUAL TOYS**
GENRE: **SPORTS**
Wii POINTS: **1,000**

A throwback to the days of NBA Street, HoopWorld is three-on-three basketball with brawling and power-ups. In the absence of an NBA license, it offers a backdrop of ancient civilizations and the "magical power of nature," which is confusing and needless. The control scheme is more complex than it has to be and the motion controls for passing and shooting are a tad unresponsive. Get past those issues, though, and you will find an enjoyable, high-energy game. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

WiiWare

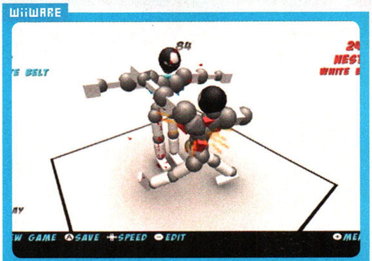
PEARL HARBOR TRILOGY: 1941—RED SUN RISING

PUBLISHER: **KONAMI** GENRE: **ACTION** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Red Sun Rising is the first episode in Legendo's three-part port of Attack on Pearl Harbor, the well-regarded PC title. The game engine is notable for its fun-before-realism approach; the battlefield is absurdly thick with action, and the ammo flows freely. The game's premise is notable in that it allows players to choose their side. (Yes, players tackling the Japanese campaign will set their sights on Pearl Harbor.) The value quotient is high: quality graphics, solid controls, multiple aircraft (with corresponding objectives), and dual campaigns offer excellent bang for your buck. It's not perfect, though: uneven difficulty and repetitive gameplay keep the glory in check. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

WIIWARE



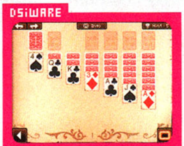
TORIBASH

PUBLISHER: **NABI STUDIOS** GENRE: **FIGHTING** Wii POINTS: **1,000**

Toribash is one of the most challenging games I've played in a while. It's not that the difficulty is cheap; it's that there's a very high learning curve. Toribash is a (surprisingly bloody) turn-based fighting game in which the goal is simply to knock down your opponent. To do this, you have control over 21 of your combatant's body parts, from the neck to the ankles to the buttocks. A simple punch, for example, requires that you interact with your fighter's chest, arm, pec, leg, and hip. Things get even crazier when you're trying flashier moves, and when you compete against others online, but it's immensely gratifying when you finally pull off the maneuvers you intend. —JUSTIN C.

Recommended

DSIWARE



24/7 SOLITARE

PUBLISHER: **COSMIGO**
GENRE: **CARD GAME**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Aptly (and cleverly) titled, 24/7 Solitaire provides an outrageous supply of gameplay. Twenty-four flavors of card solitaire are offered, complete with rules customization to stretch replay. The substantial card game is accompanied by seven variations of peg solitaire. Outstanding polish, in-game hints, undo/redo, and the ability to jump between in-progress sessions across all the game types make for perhaps the best solitaire package ever. —PATRICK C.

Recommended

DSIWARE

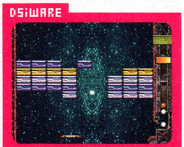
101 SHARK PETS

PUBLISHER: **TEYON**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Despite the title's promise of 101 pet sharks, there are only 11 different types of sharks in this game, and they all look pretty much identical. Apparently, changing the color of a shark makes it a whole new animal. Misnomers aside, this is a lackluster virtual-pet sim full of ugly graphics, confusing menus, and unresponsive touch-screen control. There are a decent number of minigames, but they're all terribly dull. We'll stick with our aquarium. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

DSIWARE



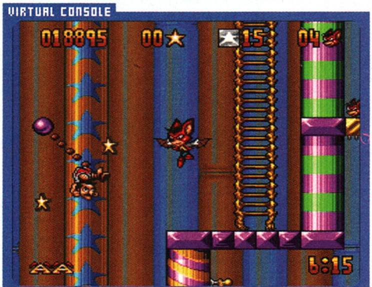
ABSOLUTE BRICKBUSTER

PUBLISHER: **TASUKE**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

This Arkanoid-style block-breaker may have a low price and a wide variety of customizable options, but once you get into the game you'll find that it plays rather poorly. The physics are completely broken, causing the ball to bounce off at random angles no matter how it strikes your paddle. The awful, repetitive music doesn't help. There are far better games in this genre (such as AlphaBounce) on DSiWare. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

VIRTUAL CONSOLE



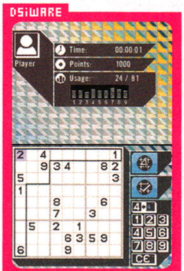
AERO THE ACRO-BAT

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** PUBLISHER: **SUNSOFT**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER** ORIGINAL RELEASE: **1993**

When Aero first appears on the screen, he immediately dons a pair of shades and moonwalks off. Yep, this little bat hails from that era of gaming when you needed only to be an animal with 'tude to star in a platformer. This title stands apart, though, thanks to its large, sprawling levels that emphasize exploration over simply reaching the goal. Aero also has a unique diagonal attack that takes some getting used to but ends up being fun to use. The fun is dampened, however, due to unresponsive controls and Aero's unnecessarily rapid acceleration. It's not the best Super NES game, but it's not bad. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



Player
Time: 00:00:01
Points: 1000
Usage: 24 / 81

CRAZY SUDOKU

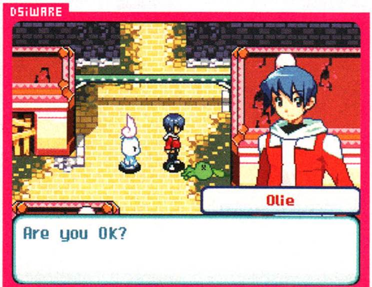
PUBLISHER: **DTP ENTERTAINMENT**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Crazy Sudoku is not, in fact, particularly crazy. It's actually a very traditional—and solidly built—digital version of the number-crunching pastime. There's nothing at all wrong with the game, but there's also nothing to make it stand out from the DSiWare sudoku crowd.

—CHRIS H.

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



Olie

Are you Ok?

CRYSTAL MONSTERS

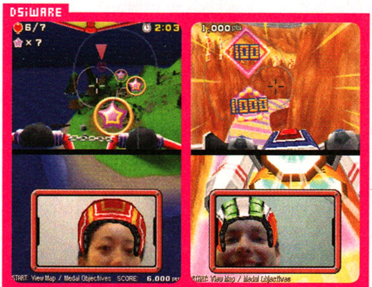
PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT** GENRE: **RPG** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Gameloft deserves some credit, we suppose, for not naming this game Crystamon. The title is about the only thing that Crystal Monsters hasn't blatantly cribbed from Nintendo's popular Pokémon series. Sure, the quest is derivative, but the monsters are awfully cute (if a bit generic in their design). The game mixes things up by introducing a few features from outside the standard Pokémon set to the battle system. The ability to block incoming attacks and chain offensive moves adds some excitement to the fights. However, the game is severely hindered by the clunky, unresponsive controls that are equally bad whether you use the Control Pad or the stylus. —PHIL T.

Hmmm...

EVALUATION STATION

DSiWARE


6/7
× 7
2:03
1,000 pts
100
1000
START: View Map / Medal Objectives SCORE: 6,000 pts
START: View Map / Medal Objectives

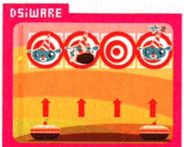
FACE PILOT: FLY WITH YOUR NINTENDO DSi CAMERA!

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **SIMULATION** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

Face Pilot is an experiment disguised as a game. The game part is a run-of-the-mill, course-based flying sim, and it offers decent fun/value. The experiment part uses your *head* as a control mechanism; the Nintendo DSi Camera translates the motion of your noggin to your glider's controls. (You can move either your head or the system itself.) A clear attempt to overcome the handheld's lack of an accelerometer, the control scheme adds nothing to the experience but the ever-present threat of losing control. That is, it doesn't work very well. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



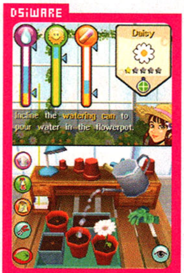
HAPPY BIRTHDAY MART

PUBLISHER: **PIXEL FEDERATION**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

With a cuteness quotient that can be described only as appalling, Happy Birthday Mart is clearly a kids-only affair. Players juggle a handful of tasks while tending shop—picking up garbage, assisting customers, and maintaining displays. Simple minigames break up the routine. Unfortunately, even children thrilled by basic fare will likely find the game's repetitiveness and glacial pace of progression irksome. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



Incline the watering can to pour water in the flowerpot.

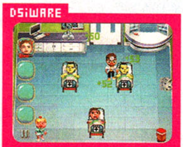
HELLO FLOWERZ

PUBLISHER: **ENJOY GAMING**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

If a publisher adapts a hobby such as gardening into a video game by turning the activities into arcade-style minigames, the results can be fun (see Majesco's Gardening Mama). But if they don't, you'll end up with a dull, repetitive, uninspired affair like Hello Flowerz. —**CHRIS H.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



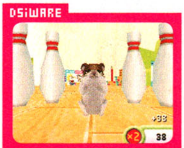
HOSPITAL HAVOC

PUBLISHER: **HANDS-ON MOBILE**
GENRE: **ALTERNATIVE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

As time-management games quickly take over the world, the good are usually characterized by amusing themes and robust value. Hospital Havoc does well on both fronts, offering a comical take on patient care (plastic surgery patients are "cured" with clown faces) and providing several difficulties spanning multiple modes. Unfortunately, too-typical gameplay and odd bugs (Career Play is stuck on Normal difficulty) temper the fun. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



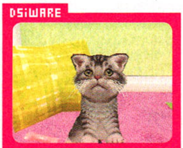
PETZ HAMSTERZ FAMILY

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

As a pet simulation, Hamsterz hits all the marks. The graphics are suitably cute as you see to the needs of your furry friends, basically feeding them and watching them sleep. On the downside, you interact more with the interface than with your pet. Minigames, such as an extremely limited bowling exercise and a slingshot target game, add variety but offer limited play value. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



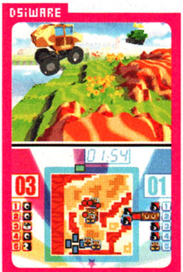
PETZ KITTENS

PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
GENRE: **SIMULATION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **800**

I expected Petz Kittens to be a minigame-heavy title like the other entries in Ubisoft's Petz series, and though there are minigames, there aren't a lot of them. You can feed and pet your kitten and play games such as peekaboo. That's pretty much it. Doing these touch-screen-centric activities allows you to level up your kitten to a full-grown cat—at which point you have to sell your pet. Granted, this title is all about kittens and not cats, but that's kinda messed up. —**JUSTIN C.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



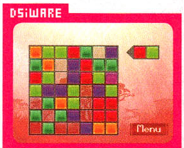
POP ISLAND—PAPERFIELD

PUBLISHER: **ODENIUS STUDIO**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Pop Island offers a supercute take on team capture the flag. Players, controlling a variety of unlockable vehicles, scramble frenetically around bumpy maps, stealing standards and shooting opposing carriers. At 200 points, the price/fun ratio is incredible. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



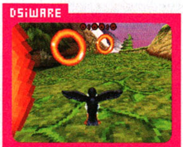
PRIMROSE

PUBLISHER: **SABARASA**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

If you invest the time to climb Primrose's steep learning curve, there is payoff, but casual puzzle fans may shy away. You place tiles in line-locked pairs on a grid with the goal of surrounding tiles of one color with those of another color. A match makes the inside tiles disappear and the outside tiles change color. It's more confusing than fun until you learn to make matches early and keep the grid from getting chaotic. —**GEORGE S.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



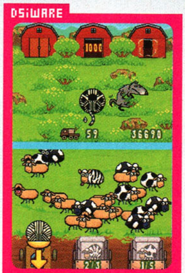
PUFFINS: LET'S RACE!

PUBLISHER: **OTHER OCEAN INTERACTIVE**
GENRE: **RACING**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

The Puffins franchise has been a manic barrage of poorly implemented homages. Can a kart racer offer redemption? Maybe! This entry has the air of a real game, offering decent graphics, a variety of courses, and multiplayer. As a rudimentary racer it works, but the unforgiving difficulty (mistakes *will* cost you) may scare away the crowd most likely to take interest: casual gamers. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSIWARE



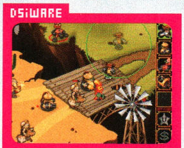
QUICKPICK FARMER

PUBLISHER: **DANCING DOTS**
GENRE: **ACTION**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **200**

Offering touch-controlled pick-up-and-play action and a quirky sense of humor, QuickPick Farmer is a unique game that's worth its asking price. Picking out sheep from a herd might not sound thrilling, but the frantic pace and surprising amount of strategy make it worthwhile. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSIWARE



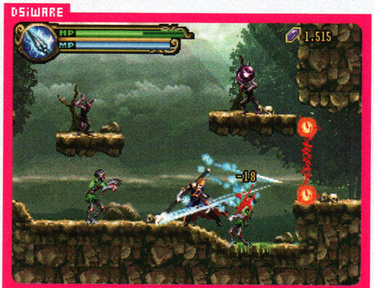
STEAMWORLD TOWER DEFENSE

PUBLISHER: **IMAGE & FORM**
GENRE: **STRATEGY**
NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

The tower-defense deluge continues; fortunately, Image & Form brings creative flair to the genre. The mechanics are standard—place various units strategically, upgrade smartly, and sell as needed—with the exception that players manually pick up loot. Nevertheless, the amusing premise (cowbots vs. cowboys), superb balance, and high-falutin' quality make for an excellent contribution to the genre. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSIWARE



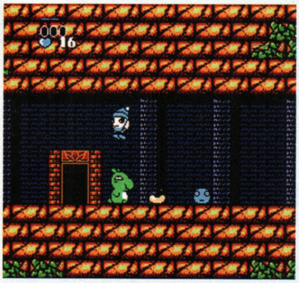
SOUL OF DARKNESS

PUBLISHER: **GAMELOFT** GENRE: **ACTION** NINTENDO DSi POINTS: **500**

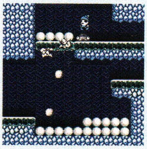
To be blunt, Soul of Darkness is a shameless Castlevania clone. The graphics, character designs, music, story, and play mechanics—even the shadows trailing behind the main character—emulate the renowned action-adventure-horror series. But despite the game's lack of originality, it's actually pretty good (especially for a mere $5). The controls aren't as tight as in real Castlevania and you don't get an interconnected world or an evolving move set, but you do get good level design, slick presentation, and several hours of solid action. Konami hasn't provided an authentic DS Castlevania for a while, so who can blame Gameloft for filling the void? —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

MORE CLASSICS ARE COMING!



Ufouria is cult-hit adventure game that's never been previously released in North America.



If you're a fan of games with timeless appeal, you'll be glad to know that several more vintage titles are on their way to Virtual Console and WiiWare. Sunsoft has announced that in addition to the recently released Aero the Acro-Bat, the company is working to bring Ufouria: The Saga and Super NES platformer Aero the Acro-Bat 2 to Virtual Console. In fact, if all goes according to plan, they could be out by the time you read this. Meanwhile, Capcom has announced support for Virtual Console Arcade in Japan, starting with its 1984 action game SonSon, but there's no word yet if it will be coming stateside. If you're into more-recent classics, though, Interplay has revealed that it's hard at work on a WiiWare remake of MDK2, a shooter/adventure starring three characters (including a six-legged dog!) with different plays styles. MDK2 was originally developed by BioWare for PC and Dreamcast. —**CHRIS H.**

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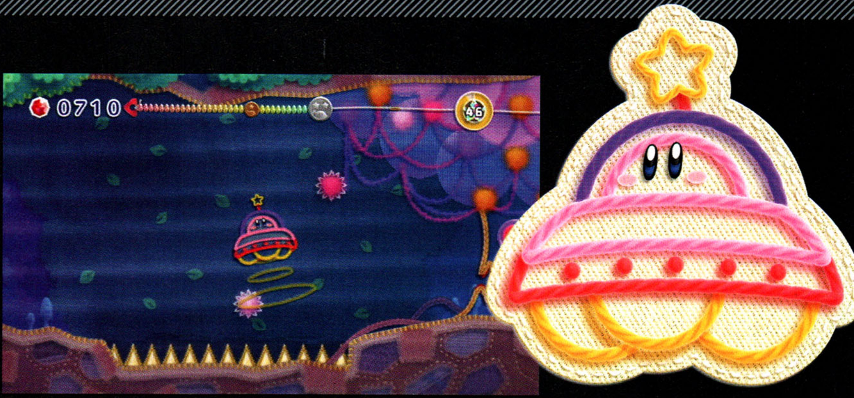


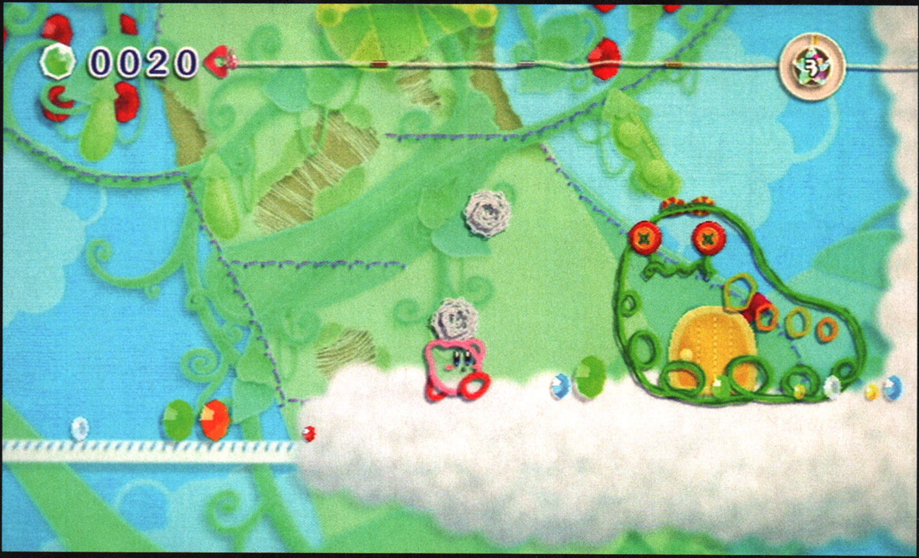
KIRBY'S EPIC YARN

A new spin on the little pink puffball

WHEN A SORCERER named Yin-Yarn runs amok in Dream Land and turns citizens into yarn, there's only one puffball who can try to eat the tomato-esque fruit on top of the sorcerer's head: Kirby. Doing so makes Yin-Yarn angry, however, and he sucks Kirby into the sock tied around his neck, transporting the pink one to Patch Land. There Kirby encounters Prince Fluff, who is being chased by a horned baddie. Kirby tries to inhale the enemy, but he discovers that air passes through him in this world of textiles. Fortunately, Kirby can morph into a wide array of other forms, such as a car (which he and the prince use to escape from the beast).

"This grass feels funny," Kirby thought. "It feels like···pants."

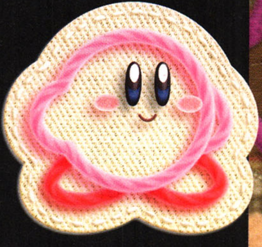
You can actually transform into a car at will in this side-scrolling adventure; while holding the Wii Remote controller sideways, simply double-tap left or right on the Control Pad, and Kirby will zoom off. Because he has more speed in this mode, he can jump higher and farther than when he's in the default Kirby form. Of course, this means he can't attack his foes since he doesn't have arms as a car. Once you change him back into the more familiar Kirby, you can lasso enemies with a long piece of yarn by pressing the 1 Button. (You can also grab an opponent by holding 1, then tap 1 again to throw it.) Naturally, Kirby has other forms, including a submarine (just jump into the water), a parachute (jump and hold 2) that allows you to descend slowly, and a weight (jump and then press down on the Control Pad) that is used to smash through certain floors. That last form comes into play during a cut-scene in which Kirby crushes a three-eyed monster that's trying to eat Prince Fluff (he's irresist-

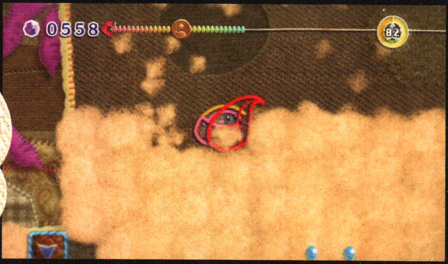


ibly delicious, apparently). The defeated monster leaves behind a strand of magic yarn, which, explains the prince, is used to stitch together pieces of the world. See, Yin-Yarn broke the realm into seven parts, and Kirby and Prince Fluff need to find all of the bits of magic yarn to put everything back together again.

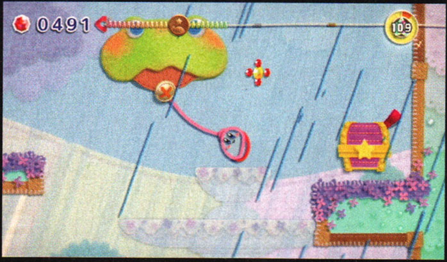
The first collection of stages is Grass Land. It's filled with a variety of locales, from a forest to a giant vine to an underground area. What's especially cool about this environmental diversity is the location-specific transformations Kirby undergoes. In the first level, Fountain Gardens, there's an enormous rocket-firing Kirby tank that is just as fun to play with now as when we tried it a few months back at E3. The waterlogged Rainbow Falls has Kirby shifting into a surfboarding penguin, whereas the underground Mole Hole has you becoming a drilling machine. (The diggable soil looks like pieces of dirty cotton.) Perhaps Kirby's oddest transformation, though, is the UFO that you can use in two of Grass Land's levels. UFO Kirby comes equipped with a tractor beam used to consume objects and enemies. Collect three items, and he'll be charged with electricity; you can then unleash a screen-filling electrical attack that annihilates pretty much everything around you.

With all of these abilities, you can get through the stages pretty easily. (In fact, you can skip two of Grass Land's levels altogether, as you beat the dragon boss, Fangora, and get the piece of magic yarn—thereby opening the next world—before you unlock the last two levels in the area.) But rushing through Kirby's Epic Yarn means neglecting secret areas, the three collectibles in each level, and the wealth of beads (think Sonic the Hedgehog's rings; they even pop out of Kirby if he gets hit by an adversary). Besides, it's been a while since we've gotten a brand-new Kirby adventure, so why not savor it? —**JUSTIN C.**





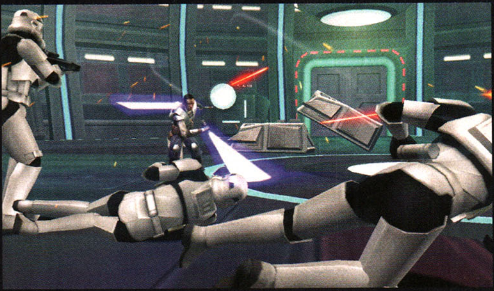
Although Kirby can't steal enemies' powers, he has an array of handy-dandy transformations to get him through this new adventure.

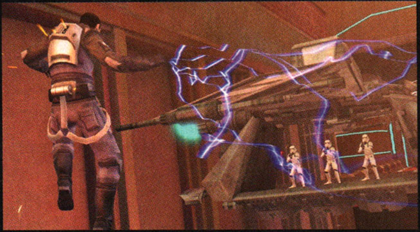


Wii
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: GOOD-FEEL
RELEASE: FALL 2010

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

Revenge of the Jedi





Two lightsabers are always better than one.

WE HAD MIXED feelings about Star Wars: The Force Unleashed when it was released in 2008. On the one hand, the game had a compelling story that fit well into the Star Wars canon, and it made you feel like a badass Jedi with your wide array of powerful Force abilities. On the other hand, the title had you repetitively swinging the Wii Remote controller way too much. Fortunately, the developers of The Force Unleashed II recognized the first game's issues and have implemented some welcome changes.

These gameplay tweaks become evident in the game's opening moments, which feature Darth Vader visiting a dungeon in the cloning facility on Kamino. There Vader encounters game protagonist Starkiller—or rather Starkiller's clone, as Vader's secret apprentice died at the end of the previous title—who has been having visions of his former confederates, Jedi Master Rahm Kota and pilot Juno Eclipse. Vader tasks him with executing Kota, who is being held captive on Cato Neimoidia. To prepare Starkiller for his mission, Vader gives him two lightsabers and a handful of shapeshifting droids (à la PROXY from the original Force Unleashed) to fight. It's in this tutorial that you learn the new control scheme: instead of slashing with the remote as in the previous game, you tap A to attack. (Making your lightsaber strikes feel even more satisfying is the fact that you can dismember enemies.) Motion controls play a part in the gameplay, of course—you shake the Nunchuk controller to fire off Force Lightning, for instance, and hold the remote horizontally to block. Additionally, during cut-scenes, motion-controlled quick-time events can pop up.

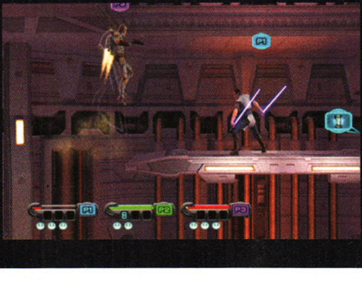
Dispatching foes builds up a combo meter that is broken up into four sections. The more sections you fill up, the more powerful a combo you can unleash when you shake the remote. Naturally, the combo isn't your only powerful attack; in addition to your arsenal of upgradeable Force powers—Push, Grip, Dash, etc.—you have the crowd-clearing Force Rage ability, which allows you to annihilate all the targets you've painted with your reticle. Starkiller also has a couple of skills he didn't have in the first game, such as the Jedi Mind Trick (you make enemies turn against their comrades) and Force Sight (you can see invisible enemies and bosses' vulnerable spots).

While Starkiller seems to be listening to Vader initially, he knows better than to trust the Dark Lord of the Sith. Starkiller rebels, escapes from Kamino, rescues Kota (who becomes a guide, giving you hints if you get stuck), and destroys all manner of Imperials, from stormtroopers to new units created specifically for this game. One example of the latter is the Terror Trooper, a foe that is playable in The Force Unleashed II's multiplayer game.

The Super Smash Bros.-inspired four-player mode offers you the chance to pit characters such as Darth Vader, Starkiller, General Kota, Maris Brood, and Boba Fett against each other. The controls are simplified here: A to attack, B to jump, Z to block, and down on the Control Pad to dash. Each player can use a secondary attack by shaking the Nunchuk (the droid PROXY's secondary attack lets him become any other character—temporarily) and a special attack by pressing C. You must collect blue canisters (you can hold up to three) in order to use special attacks, however; you can also pick up red canisters to refill your health. But don't run after canisters without looking where you're going—each stage has deadly environmental hazards. You can be blasted by the planet-destroying laser on the Death Star stage, or you can be eaten by a creature even larger than the rancor Luke fought in *Return of the Jedi*.

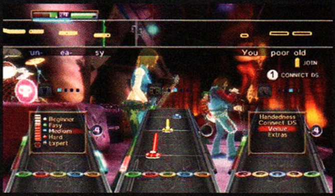
—JUSTIN C.

Wii
PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS
DEVELOPER: RED FLY STUDIO
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2010



[Left] This multiplayer mode is *way* better than Star Wars: Masters of Teräs Käsi for PlayStation.

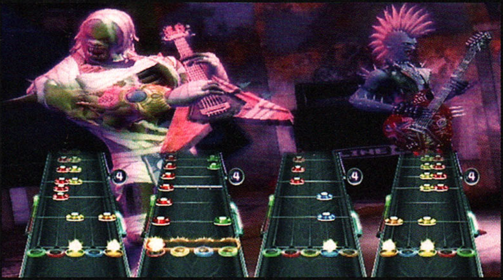
GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK



To those who are about to play Rush's "2112"—we salute you.

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS of Rock takes a slightly different approach than its predecessors—Gene Simmons narrates this storycentric Guitar Hero game in which you fight against the Beast by gathering eight superpowered rockers and finding the legendary ax. We played about halfway into the game, by which point four of your soldiers have discovered the cave that contains the weapon. As with everything in this title, you have to play a song to advance; the song in this instance is Rush's more-than-20-minute-long track "2112," broken up into seven parts (as it is on the original album). You can use all four of your warriors' powers at once for this song, allowing you to amass stars—which are needed for game progression—and to avoid failure. (Headbanger Axel Steel, for example, has the power of Resurrection, instantly reviving you if you fail out.) Of course, playing with four powers at once can get pretty crazy, but that's nothing—you can utilize all eight powers in the unlockable Domination mode. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION** DEVELOPER: **VICARIOUS VISIONS** RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2010**



[Right] With four note highways onscreen at once, you really have to pay attention as to whose lane is whose.

THE TRACKS

"2112 Pt. 1—Overture" by Rush
"2112 Pt. 2—The Temples of Syrinx" by Rush
"2112 Pt. 3—Discovery" by Rush
"2112 Pt. 4—Presentation" by Rush
"2112 Pt. 5—Oracle: The Dream" by Rush
"2112 Pt. 6—Soliloquy" by Rush
"2112 Pt. 7—Grand Finale" by Rush
"Aqualung" by Jethro Tull
"Bat Country" by Avenged Sevenfold
"Been Caught Stealing" by Jane's Addiction
"Black Rain" by Sound Garden
"Bleed It Out" by Linkin Park
"Bloodlines" by Dethklok
"Bodies" by Drowning Pool
"Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen
"Burn" by Deep Purple
"Burnin' for You" by Blue Öyster Cult
"Call Me the Breeze (Live)" by Lynyrd Skynyrd
"Calling" by Strung Out
"Chemical Warfare" by Slayer
"Cherry Bomb" by The Runaways
"Children of the Grave" by Black Sabbath
"Dance, Dance" by Fall Out Boy
"Dancing through Sunday" by AFI
"Fascination Street" by The Cure
"Feels Like the First Time" by Foreigner
"Free Ride" by Edgar Winter
"Fury of the Storm" by Dragonforce
"Hard to See" by Five Finger Death Punch
"I'm Broken" by Pantera
"I'm Not Okay (I Promise)" by My Chemical Romance
"If You Want Peace...Prepare for War" by Children of Bodom
"Indians" by Anthrax
"Interstate Love Song" by Stone Temple Pilots
"Love Gun" by KISS
"Machinehead" by Bush
"Money for Nothing" by Dire Straits
"Motivation" by Sum 41
"Move It on Over (Live)" by George Thorogood and the Destroyers
"No More Mr. Nice Guy" by Alice Cooper
"No Way Back" by Foo Fighters
"The Outsider" by A Perfect Circle
"Paranoid (Live)" by Metallica & Ozzy Osbourne
"Pour Some Sugar on Me (Live)" by Def Leppard
"Psychosocial" by Slipknot
"Ravenous" by Atreyu
"Re-Ignition (Live)" by Bad Brains
"Renegade" by Styx
"Savior" by Rise Against
"Scumbag Blues" by Them Crooked Vultures
"Self Esteem" by The Offspring
"Seven Nation Army" by The White Stripes
"Sharp Dressed Man (Live)" by ZZ Top
"Speeding" by Steve Vai
"Spiderman" by The Ramones
"Stray Cat Blues" by The Rolling Stones
"Sudden Death" by Megadeth
"There's No Secrets This Year" by Silversun Pickups
"Tick Tick Boom" by The Hives
"Ties That Bind" by Alter Bridge
"Unskinny Bop" by Poison
"Uprising" by Muse
"Waidmanns Heil" by Rammstein
"We're Not Gonna Take It" by Twisted Sister
"What Do I Get?" by Buzzcocks
"Wish" by Nine Inch Nails
"(You Can Still) Rock in America" by Night Ranger

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
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Wii™ NINTENDO DS™

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PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE UNWOUND FUTURE

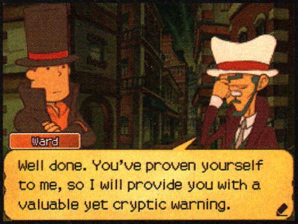
Time waits for no man—except Professor Layton.

PROFESSOR LAYTON AND the Unwound Future begins with a bang, quite literally. With the professor and his young assistant Luke in attendance, a demonstration of the world's first time machine goes horribly wrong; the contraption explodes, resulting in the disappearance of both its inventor and England's prime minister.

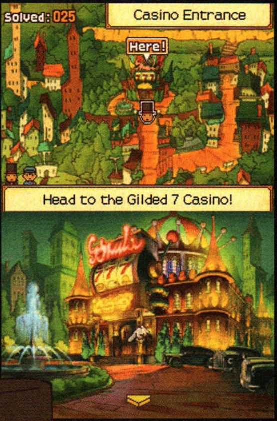
But that's just the beginning of the weird happenings; shortly thereafter, a strange letter directs Professor Layton to a mysterious clock shop, and the next thing he knows, he and Luke have apparently been transported 10 years into the future! Though the steampunk-style future of Professor Layton's world might not seem especially technologically advanced, the fact remains that London has radically changed for the worse. Much of the city has fallen into disrepair, and criminal activity is rampant. As you try to figure out what's going on, you'll use a point-and-click interface to explore the city, investigate your surroundings, and talk to quirky characters.

But like in previous Professor Layton adventures, the heart of the game is its puzzles—lots and lots of puzzles. Everywhere you go, someone or something has a puzzle for you to solve. Whether it's a clue-based logic puzzle, a jigsaw-style block puzzle, a counting game, a riddle, or a maze, the puzzles will test your brain power in a wide variety of fun ways.

The more puzzles you solve, the deeper the mysteries get. Once you meet up with the future incarnation of Luke, he informs you that the criminal mastermind ruling London's underworld is none other than Professor Layton himself! Of course, in the Professor Layton games nothing is quite what it seems; discovering the truth will be up to you. —**CHRIS H.**



Well done. You've proven yourself to me, so I will provide you with a valuable yet cryptic warning.



Head to the Gilded 7 Casino!

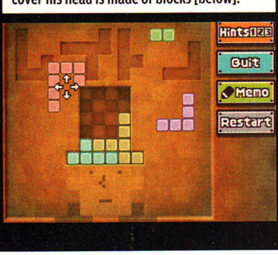
DS

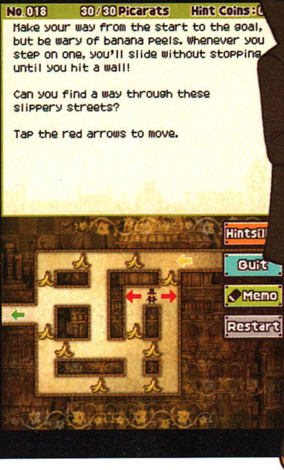
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**

DEVELOPER: **LEVEL-5**

RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2010**

Professor Layton is shocked [above] to discover his head is made of blocks [below].

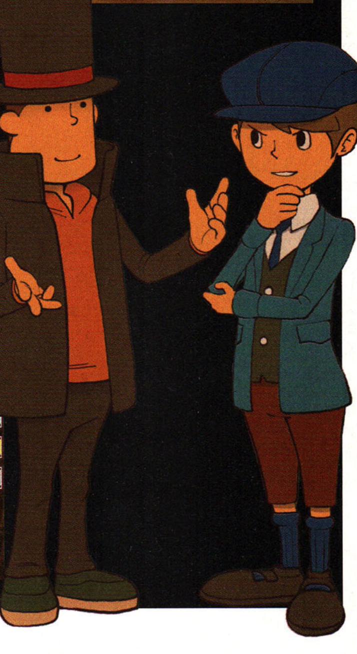




Make your way from the start to the goal, but be wary of banana peels. Whenever you step on one, you'll slide without stopping until you hit a wall!

Can you find a way through these slippery streets?

Tap the red arrows to move.

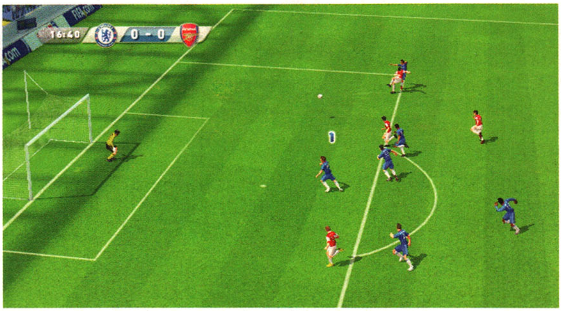


FIFA SOCCER 11

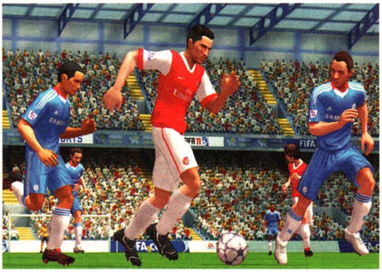
Electronic Arts takes the beautiful game to the streets.

While FIFA Soccer 11 includes the usual soccer gameplay that fans expect from the series, it also includes a new mode to appeal to the non-core footie fan: five-on-five indoor and street soccer. It's not the first time the franchise has strayed from the norm—there have been three FIFA Street titles, after all—but the developers have made strides to improve the experience with new animations and better overall controls. Oh, and arcadey power-ups. These supermoves (which can be switched off if you want to keep the game more grounded in reality) include such things as speed bursts and power shots, as well as a mode in which your opponents physically shrink. Adding to the zaniness are the various goal types, such as a miniature one (which is small enough that there's no keeper) and an elevated one (think a basketball hoop). —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
RELEASE DATE: **OCTOBER 2010**



[Below] The developers wanted to ensure that they brought out the proper likenesses of the star players.



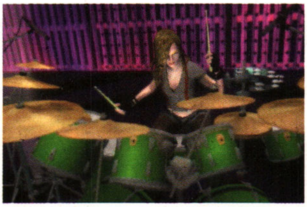
ROCK BAND 3

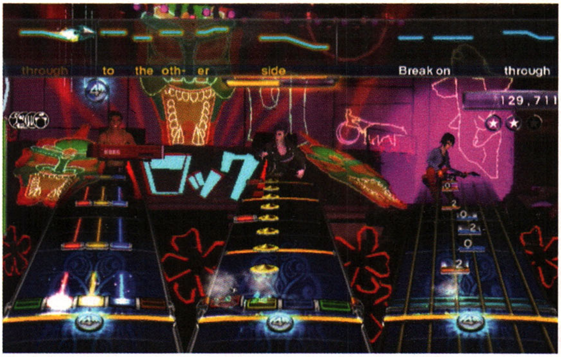
Just don't call it a keytar.

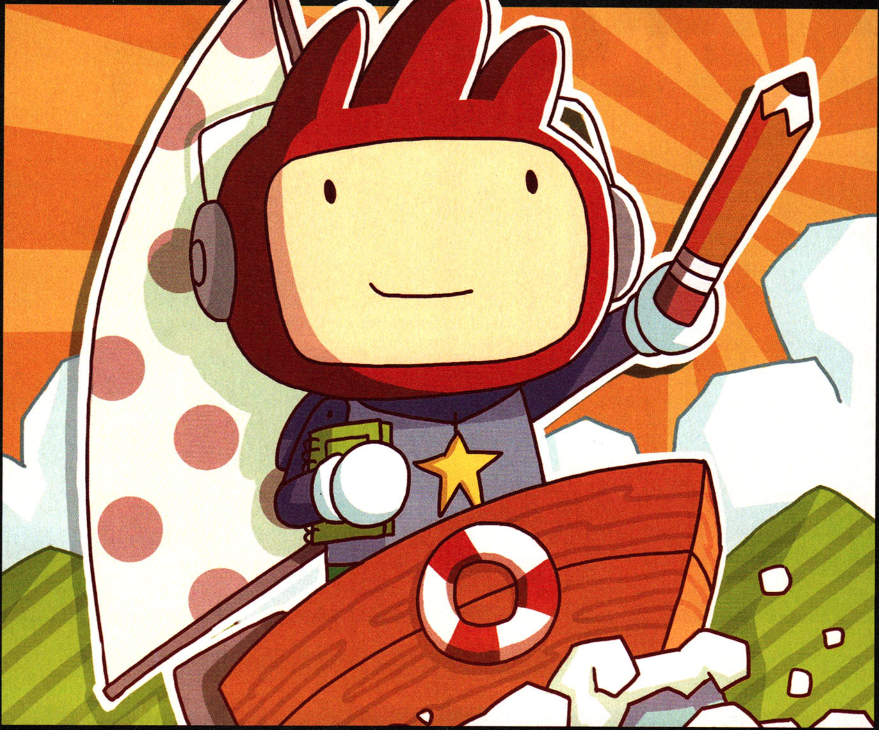
With the previous iterations of Rock Band, you got a mic, a guitar, a bass, and drums—the band basics, essentially. So what other instrument could be added to the mix? Why, a keyboard, of course! Think of how many songs use a keyboard/piano (Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" is a fantastic example); it's a natural fit. With Rock Band 3's 25-key keyboard and a Pro Keys mode that makes use of all of those keys, you really do get the full keyboarding experience. Fortunately, the game includes numerous tutorials to teach you how to play. And if you'd rather just jam casually, you can do that, too—the non-Pro Keys mode makes use of just five keys, allowing you to rock out on the keyboard as you would the guitar. (In fact, you can perform the guitar parts of songs with the keyboard if you want.) —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **MTV GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **HARMONIX**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2010**

[Above] You'll need practice before you start using more than five keys.

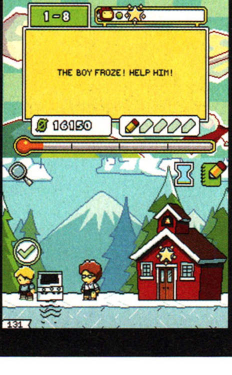


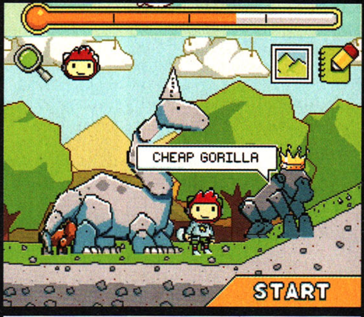




SUPER SCRIBBLENAUTS

Because you've always wanted a cheerful mechanical carnivorous lavender aardvark.

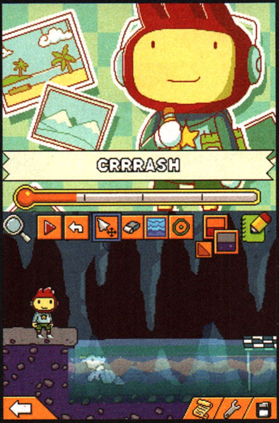




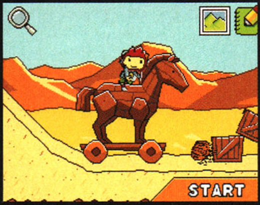
[Above] Just in case your other gorillas are too expensive.

UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES—THAT'S what Super Scribblenauts is all about. Within a few minutes after turning on the game, I had the protagonist, Maxwell, riding atop a gorilla that was in turn riding a giant flying brontosaurus, which was tied to a chupacabra. That, my friends, is entertainment that you're not going to get anywhere else.

But while it's easy to spend hours upon hours coming up with ridiculous scenarios like that one thanks to the game's create-anything-by-writing-it concept, what makes Super Scribblenauts so promising is that the structured gameplay has been refined, too. Since the levels focus more on puzzles and less on overcoming obstacles than the first Scribblenauts did, Super

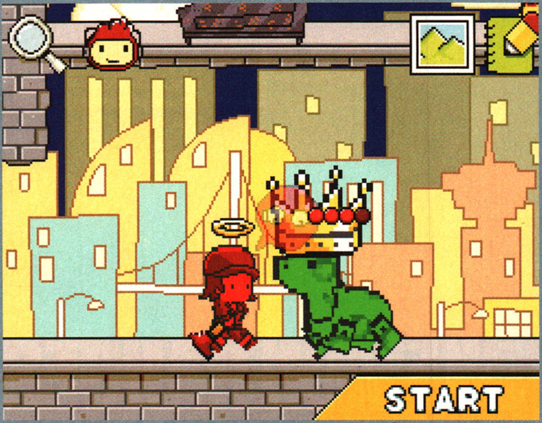


[Above] The level editor is a vast improvement over the one in the original Scribblenauts.

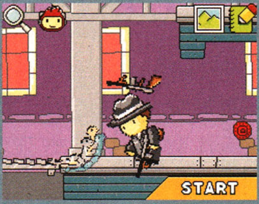


GAME ON!

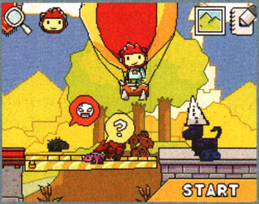
We decided to put Super Scribblenauts to the test by re-creating a few of our favorite game scenarios. Here's what happened.



First up, a super heroic red plumber versus an evil giant spiky green king turtle. The plumber defeated the king turtle almost instantly.



Next, we wanted to see what would happen if we made a solid snake, a liquid snake, and a naked snake share the same space with a big boss. The three snakes joined forces and turned against the big boss, poisoning him.



Last but not least, we created a blue sonic hedgehog, a red feisty echidna, a pink girly hedgehog, a stupid obese big purple cat, and an orange mutant squirrel. Everything was fine until we added a black violent angry fake hedgehog, which promptly annihilated most of the other creatures.

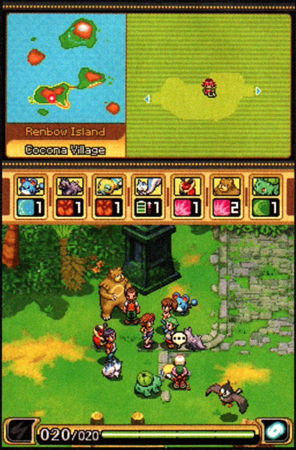
Scribblenauts challenges you to come up with clever solutions rather than relying on the brute force of whatever creature you want to create. An "invincible hero" won't do you much good when your goal is to create a food item that contains eggs, sauce, and chocolate (or a combination of other specific ingredients). The level scenarios are diverse—other stages have you, for example, giving a man different types of potions to turn him into a dragon, figuring out how to wake up an astronaut and extinguish a fire before you're sucked out an airlock, and giving people vehicles of the correct colors. Adjectives are the biggest addition to the game, and to emphasize this, some stages are designated as Adjective Levels, meaning that you must use adjectives to succeed (unless you're really sneaky).

The level editor is much more robust, too. Not only can you design stages completely from scratch, but you can select the rules for each custom stage. Like in the original Scribblenauts, custom levels can be action-oriented affairs that simply involve reaching the Starite, or you can assign parameters such as giving gifts to certain characters, slaying particular enemies, destroying specific objects, using ingredients to make something using the Create-a-Tron machine, racing other characters to a designated spot, and more.

There's seemingly no end to the depth of Super Scribblenauts, but our preview version came to an end after about only 30 levels. Fortunately, the final game will be much bigger, and we're very eager to try it out.

—CHRIS H.

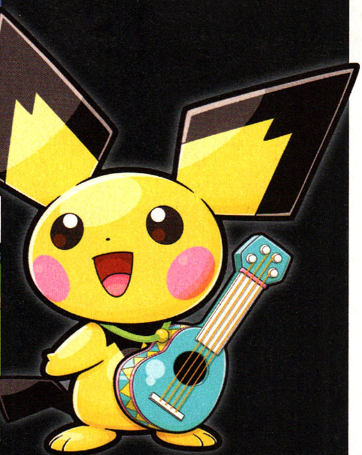
DS PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **5TH CELL**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2010**



???

Whee haa!

[Right] We thought Pichu couldn't get any cuter until we saw one with a ukulele.



???

Wait! Did you...
come here by Celebi's Time Travel?

POKÉMON RANGER: GUARDIAN SIGNS

The Pokémon need a protector—are you prepared?

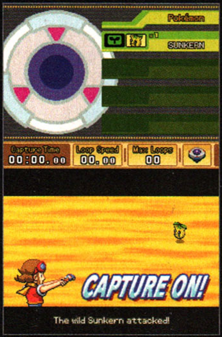
LIKE THE PREVIOUS two entries in the Pokémon Ranger series, Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs isn't about battling Pokémon against each other, but about working with Pokémon toward a common goal. As a Pokémon Ranger you must protect people and Pokémon, which includes stopping the mischievous Pokémon Pinchers, a group that's been stealing Pokémon across the peaceful Oblivia region. You're joined by the adorable Ukulele Pichu, who's lost all its forest friends to the Pokémon Pinchers and wants to help you save them.

Your quest is divided into missions. When you encounter wild Pokémon, you befriend them by using your Capture Styler to frantically draw loops around the Pokémon until your feelings of friendship are conveyed and it decides to join your party. The Pokémon won't make that task easy though—they all have attacks they can dish out to damage your Capture Styler, so learning to balance speed with caution is key.

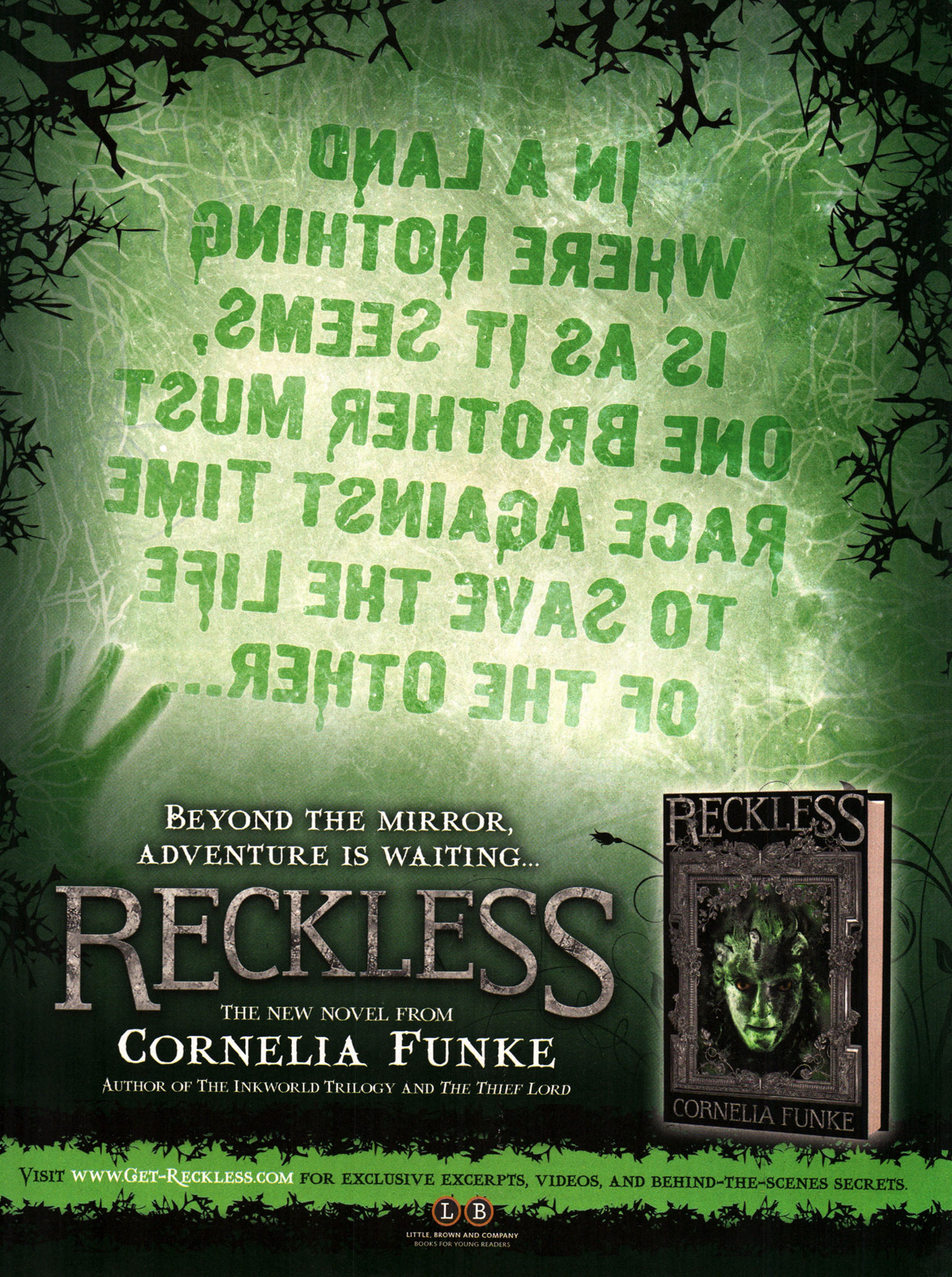
Up to eight Pokémon can accompany you at any given time, and you must consider their abilities carefully to build a well-balanced team. Each Pokémon has both a Field Move and a Poké Assist, and there are tons of possible combinations. Field Moves help you overcome obstacles while on a mission, such as by using the move Cut to remove a fallen log blocking the path, while Poké Assists help you capture other Pokémon by attacking or otherwise blocking them during the capture.

Some Legendary Pokémon are present, too, and you can summon them by drawing certain Ranger Signs on the touch screen. The fearsome Legendary Pokémon Raikou, Entei, and Suicune play a major role in the story, but early in our quest we also encountered a rarely seen Celebi that seemed to be trying to tell us something. It appears the Oblivia region holds a tantalizing mystery, and we can't wait to learn its secrets. —**CAROLYN G.**

DS PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **CREATURES INC./THE POKÉMON COMPANY**
RELEASE: **FALL 2010**



The wild Sunkern attacked!


IN A LAND
WHERE NOTHING
IS AS IT SEEMS,
ONE BROTHER MUST
RACE AGAINST TIME
TO SAVE THE LIFE
OF THE OTHER...
RECKLESS
CORNELIA FUNKE

BEYOND THE MIRROR,
ADVENTURE IS WAITING...

RECKLESS

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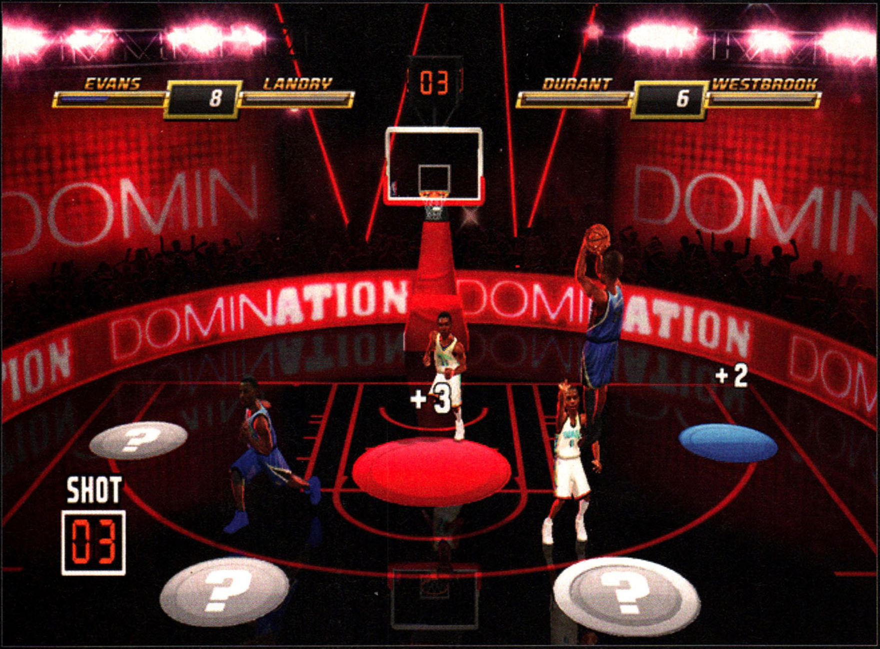
LB
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY
BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS



[Above] Hustle! You're not going to dominate the court if you're just standing around. [Below] Mascots take a more proactive role.

RUFUS
P1
WALLACE
CHA 0:48 DET
20 2ND QTR 12
HAMILTON
STUCKEY
EA SPORTS
DETROIT PISTONS
0:48

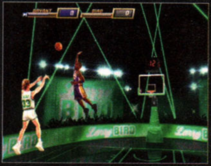
NBA JAM

If you thought this game was arcadey before...

IF YOU'VE BEEN keeping up with our coverage of NBA Jam, you know it's an over-the-top, two-on-two basketball game that recaptures the fun and zaniness of its predecessors. What you may not know, however, is that the insanity doesn't stop there. You see, in addition to the Classic mode, NBA Jam offers the Remix Tour, in which you try to dominate six divisions across the US by playing games against other pro teams. Each team you go up against has three tiers of challenges (bronze, silver, and gold), with each tier worth one, two, or three Remix Points (there can be different point values for the same tier in different divisions, though; bronze can be worth one or two points, for instance). Accumulate enough points, and you unlock new divisions.

What makes Remix Tour mode crazier than even NBA Jam's norm is the conditions of the games themselves. For example, Remix 2v2 plays similarly to the standard game, only you have an array of power-ups at your disposal. Simply run over an icon floating on the court, and you can temporarily shrink; have your opponents bounce off of you; or improve your strength, speed, or quickness. It's imperative that you or your ally gets these pick-ups quickly, as your opponents can get souped up as well.

Another full-court two-on-two Remix Tour game is Smash, wherein your goal is to smash the opposing team's backboard. Doing so requires that you perform dunks or alley-oops to chip away at the backboard's "health" meter. It's a great help if you're on fire—meaning you hit three shots in a row without your opponent scoring—as that allows you to perform superhuman dunks (well, more superhu-



WALLACE
2:16
HAMILTON
STUCKEY
CHARLOTTE 4
DETROIT 4
1ST QUARTER 2:16

man than usual, anyway).

The other games we played were half-court affairs, which changes the perspective from a side camera view to one that faces the hoop. Domination 2v2 is, as the name implies, a two-on-two mode. In this game, there are specific spots on the court from which you should shoot—a successful basket from one these spots marks it as your territory. The more real estate you acquire and the longer you hold onto these positions, the more points you accrue as the game progresses. The winner is the first to collect 100 points.

Unlike the other Remix Tour game types, 21 is a one-on-one-on-one matchup. The title pretty much sums up the goal: the first one to 21 points wins. Before you shoot, though, make sure you've cleared the ball past the three-point line, or else your shot won't count. This mode isn't nearly as outlandish as the others, but competing against two other players does keep things moving. If you miss a shot, for instance, the guy in your face may not be able to catch the rebound, but the third player will be ready and waiting for it.

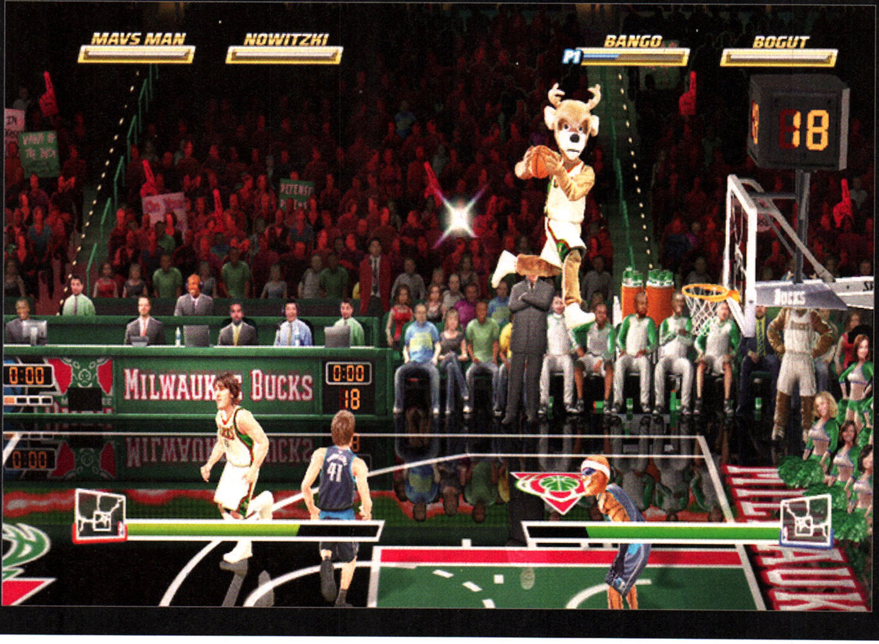
The final game we played (though not necessarily the final game available in the Remix Tour mode) was Boss Battle. Another one-on-one setup, it has you trying to score 21 points on some of the best basketball players ever. When we faced off against Kobe Bryant, before the match began we were told Kobe doesn't like it when you get physical with him. It didn't help all that much, though, as Kobe was able to destroy us pretty quickly (despite the fact that my player was also Kobe!). We were promised even more exciting bosses later in the game, but we'll have to wait for NBA Jam's release before we find out who they all are. —**JUSTIN C.**

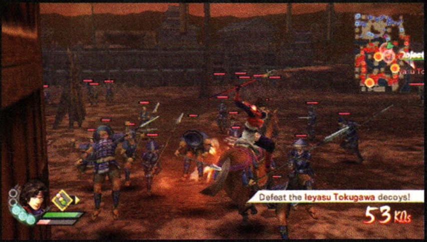
JAMES
O'NEAL
15 15
2:04

Wii **PUBLISHER:**
ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
RELEASE DATE: **OCTOBER 2010**

NASH
MALONE
13
Karl Malone

[Below] That's not the most intimidating game face we've seen....




Defeat the Ieyasu Tokugawa decoys!
53 KOs

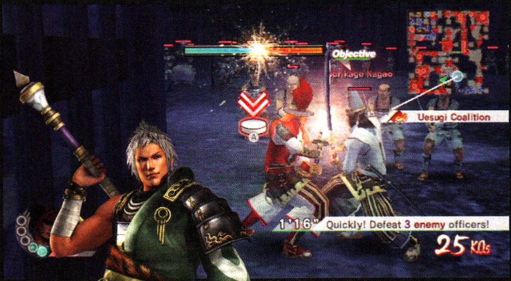
SAMURAI WARRIORS 3

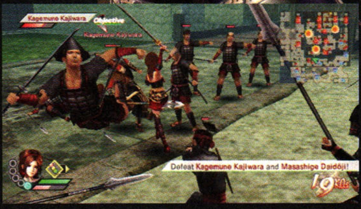
Hack-'n'-slash fans, come out to play!

WHO KNEW THAT action games could be educational? Taking place during the Sengoku (or Warring States) period—which was the time of the civil war between the east and west of Japan that eventually led to the unification of the country—Samurai Warriors 3 features enough historical characters and events that you might just learn a thing or two. (Albeit it's all presented in a hack-'n'-slash-heavy, over-the-top fashion, so it's not a boring history lesson.) Of course, Samurai Warriors 3 isn't the only Sengoku-based game to be released this year; Capcom's Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes is also on the way. Comparisons between the two titles are inevitable—especially given that they release within a month of each other—but what sets Samurai Warriors 3 apart is its various modes.

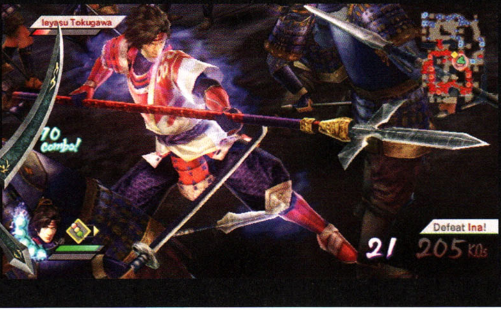
Aside from the standard Story mode—in which characters have their own individual adventures that you can play through—Samurai Warriors 3 has a Historical mode as well as a mode called Murasame Castle. In the former, you take a character you've created (choosing from a handful of faces, clothes, and weapons) and fight in stages based upon real-life Warring States-period battles. The Murasame Castle mode takes a more fantastical tack; it's an entirely fictional scenario in which you fight samuraiesque demons as you make your way to Murasame Castle. This mode—which is based upon a Japan-only The Legend of Zelda-ish game called The Mysterious Murasame Castle (for the Famicom Disk System)—is especially noteworthy due to its cooperative gameplay. You and a friend can play online over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, or offline via a split screen (Story mode offers only offline co-op). Playing cooperatively really added to our enjoyment of the game, and helps make Samurai Warriors 3 feel somewhat similar to the beat-'em-ups of yesteryear. —**JUSTIN C.**

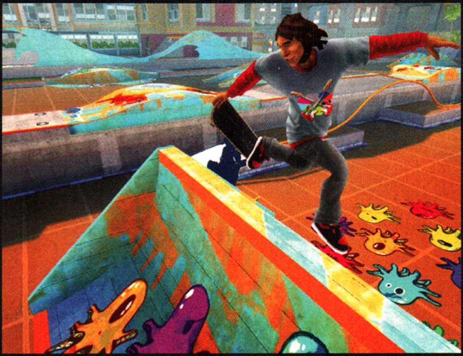
Wii PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **OMEGA FORCE**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2010**

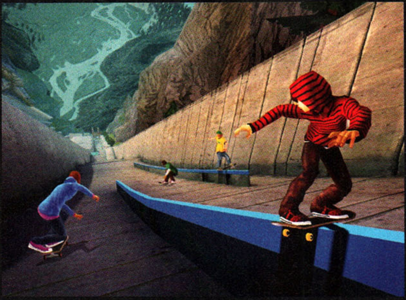

Objective
Kagetora Nagao
Uesugi Coalition
1'16" Quickly! Defeat 3 enemy officers!
25 KOs


Kagemune Kajiwara
Objective
Defeat Kagemune Kajiwara and Masashige Daidōji!
19 KOs

[Left] While you can defeat hundreds of soldiers, that's not the point of the game; you have specific targets to eliminate.


Ieyasu Tokugawa
70 Combo!
Defeat Ina!
21
205 KOs





[Left] Performing tricks brings vibrancy to the city.
[Above] Remember, kids, it's just a game. Do not try this at home!

SHAUN WHITE SKATEBOARDING

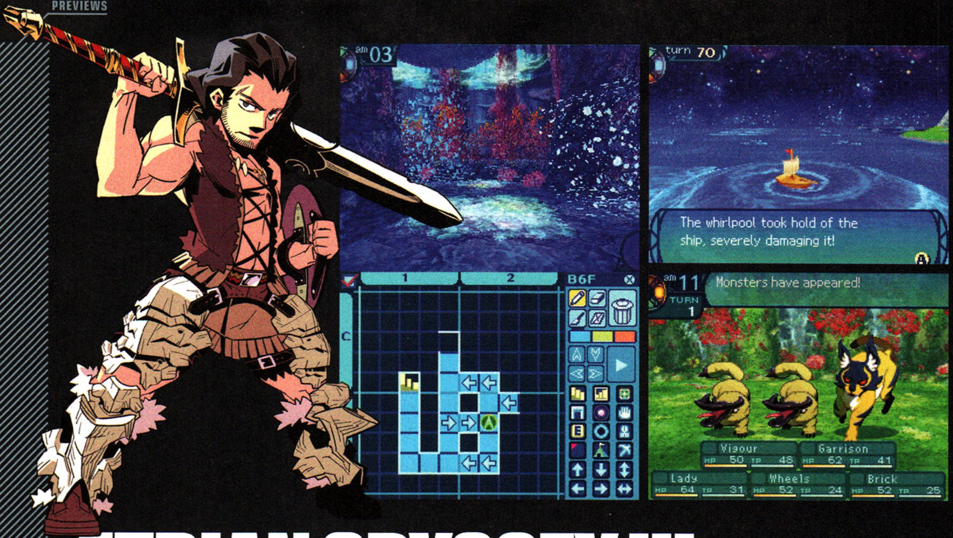
Making skateboarding fun again

IT'S CLEAR FROM our latest hands-on time with Shaun White Skateboarding that rather than go nuts creating a super-realistic simulation, the developers at Ubisoft Montreal are focusing all efforts on making the game feel good to play. A quick flick of the Wii Remote performs an ollie, and it's really pretty easy to hop onto rails and edges to grind. Holding A or B and flicking up, down, left, or right performs flip tricks—the same concept carries over to the rest of the trick system, where A or B plus a directional movement produces different tricks. Getting more air off the top of jumps is as simple as whipping the remote upward at just the right time.

The controls are very responsive and make stringing together combos a lot easier than in other skateboarding games. In a lot of ways (including the level design), it reminds us of the first couple of Tony Hawk games, which were all about doing cool stuff with simple controls. The one area we're hoping gets some polish before release is the support for the Wii Balance Board accessory, however. As it stands, the peripheral is used only for balancing during grinds and for performing ollies, both of which are more satisfying to do with the Wii Remote.

Getting back to gameplay, the goal of this game's Career mode isn't just to beat every level—it's also about transforming the world around you. It starts out dreary and grey, but comes alive with color as you complete challenges and activate new paths. The world starts to look and feel energized, with its vibrancy and its catchy tunes. You're bringing fun back to a city run by a bunch of set-in-their ways bureaucrats—kind of in the same way Shaun White Skateboarding looks to bring fun back to a stagnating genre. —**RANDY N.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTREAL**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2010**



The whirlpool took hold of the ship, severely damaging it!

Monsters have appeared!

Vigour	Garrison	Lady	Wheels	Brick
HP 50 TP 48	HP 62 TP 41	HP 64 TP 31	HP 52 TP 24	HP 52 TP 25

ETRIAN ODYSSEY III: THE DROWNED CITY

Set sail for old-school adventure.

IN AN ERA when many RPGs are being simplified in an attempt to garner a more mainstream audience, Atlus's Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City is stringently adhering to its hardcore roots. Like its predecessors, this installment will push you to your gaming limits as you create a five-person party from scratch (including their names and portraits), then venture into the deep, challenging Yggdrasil Labyrinth, where you'll face random monster encounters and hazardous traps, all the while mapping the dungeon on the Nintendo DS system's touch screen.

But that's not to say Etrian Odyssey III isn't trying anything new. On the contrary—it eschews some genre conventions, such as typical character classes. You won't find any warriors, thieves, or black mages here. In fact, you won't find any of the classes from previous Etrian Odyssey games. Instead you'll get to choose from 10 classes such as prince (or princess), buccaneer, ninja, wildling, zodiac, and farmer. Functionally, the new character types fill some traditional niches—the gladiator is your straightforward attacker and the zodiac wields elemental spells—but they nonetheless provide some fresh options that separate the game from the pack. Eventually you'll be able to mix and match abilities by assigning a subclass to each party member. If you've ever wanted to play as a ninja-farmer, here's your chance.

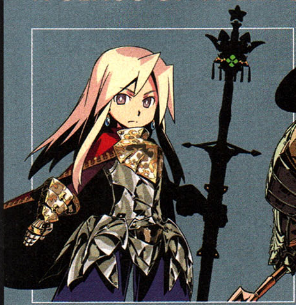
The game also breaks from the norm by enabling you to set sail and explore the vast, open sea. Unlike in the labyrinth, there are no random battles at sea; the focus is on exploration and charting the unknown. (Don't worry, nautical-action fans; there are occasional nonrandom battles.) The distance you can travel, however, is limited by the supplies you bring. As you discover new parts of the world, you'll gain access to better supplies, which in turn allow you increase your exploration efforts. Furthermore, successfully completing missions at sea allows you to proceed deeper into the labyrinth and vice versa.

THE ART OF EXPLORATION

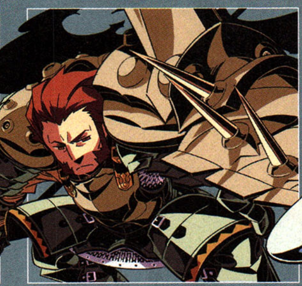
Etrian Odyssey III is aimed at hardcore RPG fans, and years of meticulous research indicate that hardcore RPG fans love cool stuff—especially when it's free. To that end, Atlus has announced that the Etrian Odyssey: Forests of Eternity art book will be given away as a bonus item when you preorder Etrian Odyssey III from select retailers. The 60-page book features art from all three Etrian Odyssey games.

A CLASS OF THEIR OWN

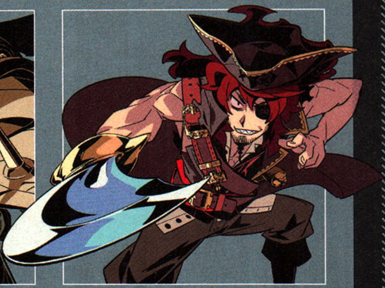
When it comes to character classes, Etrian Odyssey III is changing all the rules. Take a look at some of the playable hero types.



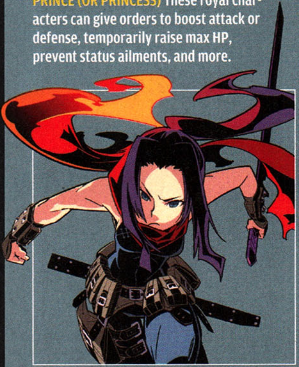
PRINCE (OR PRINCESS) These royal characters can give orders to boost attack or defense, temporarily raise max HP, prevent status ailments, and more.



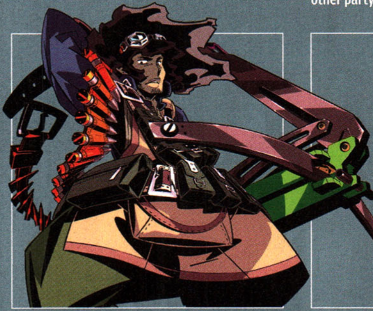
HOPLITE Hoplites are defense specialists, as evidenced by their shining gold armor. They also wield spears to pierce enemy lines.



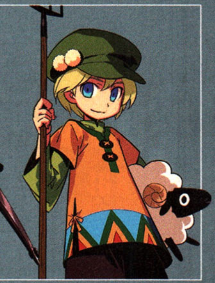
BUCCANEER Descended from pirates, buccaneers are able to wield swords or guns. Their cooperative techniques follow up attacks from other party members.



NINJA One of the ninja's best abilities is the power to duplicate itself, either as a distractive dummy or as a fully controllable clone.



ARBALIST These long-range attackers are experts in using crossbows and cannons. They can also use flares and smoke grenades to enhance or decrease visibility.

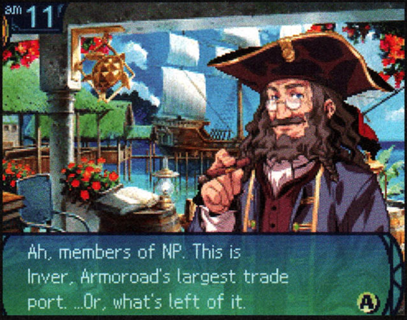


FARMER Farmers are admittedly lousy fighters, but they have unusual skills. For instance, the party earns extra EXP if a farmer actually survives a battle.

Success also means that you'll be rewarded with money and experience points, meaning you can buy new gear and upgrade your characters' class-specific abilities by allocating skill points. And believe us: considering some of the challenges you'll encounter in the Yggdrasil Labyrinth—especially the frighteningly powerful enemies called FOEs—you'll need every advantage you can get.

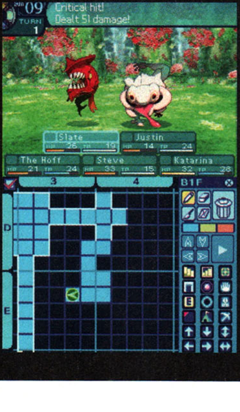
—CHRIS H.

DS PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **ATLUS**
RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2010**

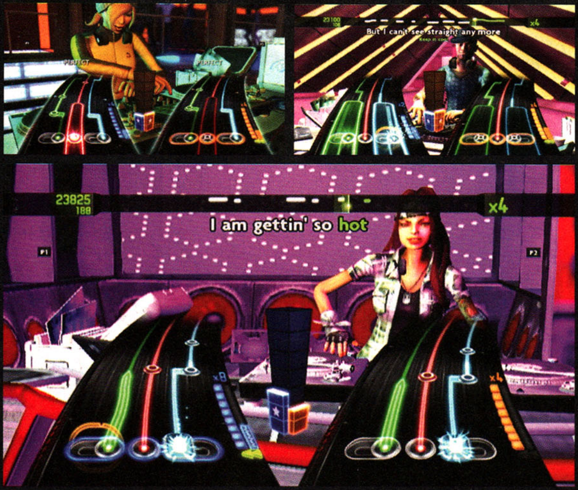


Ah, members of NP. This is Inver, Armoroad's largest trade port. ...Or, what's left of it.

[Above] If you want to earn your sea legs, you'll have to visit the port.



Critical hit!
Dealt 51 damage!



DJ HERO 2

Where it's at

LAST YEAR DJ HERO introduced a breath of fresh air to the music-game genre, and the franchise returns this fall to keep those plastic records spinning. Headlining a host of new features for the sequel is the ability to play with two turntables and a microphone. Vocalists will be scored based on pitch and range detection (just like in Guitar Hero), while each DJ will have distinct tracks to follow. Players can drop in and out at any time or just let the music play by itself. That last part holds appeal because all 70-plus mash-ups in DJ Hero 2 are exclusive to the game; you can't get them anywhere else. The mixes we've heard thus far are really well done, and the soundtrack boasts greater diversity than last year's, with a little less hip-hop and a bit more dance, pop, and techno.

The sequel also gives players expanded options for creativity. At set points in each mix, you'll be able to perform freestyle scratching, cross-fading, and sampling. To ensure that it sounds good no matter what, the scratches were recorded by professional DJs, all of the tracks are synced to the beat, and the samples are pulled directly from the tracks being mixed. So you're free to experiment without fear of committing aural atrocities.

A new single-player Empire mode will give you the opportunity to build your own global entertainment dynasty, whereas DJ Battle pits two players against each other with custom-designed mixes and crowd-rousing call-and-response gameplay. DJ Hero 2 and a turntable controller will set you back $99.99, which is $20 less than the original game. Activision will also release a $149.99 "party bundle" that includes the software, two turntables, and a mic. There's a standalone version of the game planned as well, for those who already own the requisite peripheral. —STEVE T.

I am gettin' so hot
REWIND LOST
50 HIT STREAK
x4

You know what would be really hot? A Kenny Rogers-Gwar mash-up.

Wii

PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **FREESTYLE GAMES**
RELEASE: **FALL 2010**

MEGA MASHES

These are the DJ Hero 2 mixes we know about so far. The full track list will include more than 70 mash-ups from a whopping 108 artists.

2Pac "California Love" *mixed with* **B.o.B. feat. Bruno Mars** "Nothin' On You"

Kanye West "Love Lockdown" *mixed with* **Metallica** "The Day That Never Comes"

Dizzee Rascal & Armand Van Helden "Bonkers" *mixed with* **Basement Jaxx** "Where's Your Head At"

Nas "Hero" *mixed with* **Talib Kweli** "Get By"

Snow "Informer" *mixed with* **Jackson 5** "ABC"

Janet Jackson "Nasty" *mixed with* **Justice** "D.A.N.C.E."

Lady Gaga "Just Dance" *mixed with* **Deadmau5** "Ghosts 'n' Stuff"

Pussycat Dolls feat. Busta Rhymes "Don't Cha" *mixed with* **Pitbull** "I Know You Want Me (Calle Ocho)"

Iyaz "Replay" *mixed with* **Rihanna** "Rude Boy"

Nelly "Hot in Herre" *mixed with* **Warren G & Nate Dogg** "Regulate"

The Chemical Brothers "Galvanize" *mixed with* **The Chemical Brothers** "Leave Home"

DJ Shadow "Midnight In A Perfect World" (FSG Remix)

Kelis "Acapella" (David Guetta Extended Remix) (FSG Remix)

Daft Punk "Human After All" (FSG Remix)

Battle Mixes:

Edwin Starr "War" *mixed with* **Justice** "Waters of Nazareth"

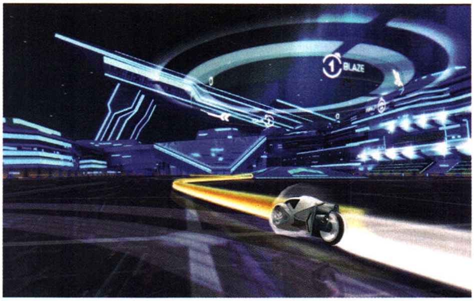
MSTRKRFT feat. N.O.R.E. "Bounce" (FSG Remix)

TRON: EVOLUTION—BATTLE GRIDS

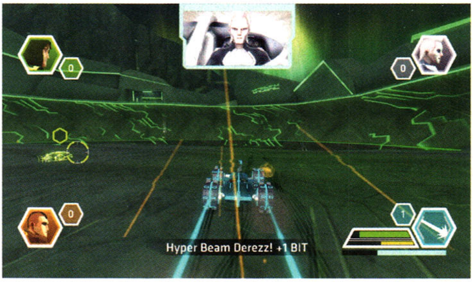
Light Cycles, discs, and neon—what more could a TRON fan ask for?

Set in the time period between the original 1982 *TRON* film and the upcoming *TRON: Legacy*, TRON: Evolution–Battle Grids has you competing in 15 different events in what's essentially the Olympics of the TRON universe. See, the heroic Tron has stepped down as the champion of the games, allowing others (including some characters from the *TRON* films) to vie for the title. We played four events in our hands-on demo—Light Cycle Arena, Light Cycle Race, Light Runner Arena, and Light Discs—and all of them are controlled by holding the Wii Remote NES-style. To drive the motorcycle-ish Light Cycles and the dune-buggy-esque Light Runners, you steer by tilting the remote, accelerate with 2, and brake with 1; in the on-foot Light Discs event you run around via the Control Pad, jump with 2, and throw discs at your opponents with 1. All of the fast-paced games we played were pretty fun, but it was the four-player Power Stone-inspired Light Discs that had us coming back for more. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **PROPAGANDA GAMES/N-SPACE**
RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2010**



[Above] It wouldn't be a TRON game without Light Cycles. [Below] Light Runners may not have the Light Cycles' speed, but they are equipped with firearms.

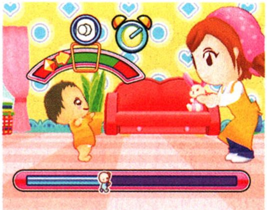


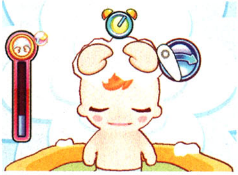
BABYSITTING MAMA

Stick your Wii Remote where the sun don't shine!

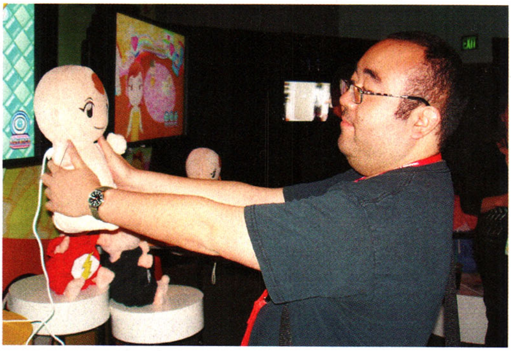
There's no denying it: Babysitting Mama is indeed a baby game. But in this case, that's not a bad thing. Though clearly not for hardcore gamers, this Wii console follow-up to the popular Cooking Mama series takes the same minigame-based approach and applies it to activities such as gently rocking a baby to sleep, washing a baby, feeding a baby, and playing simple games with a baby (such as hide-and-seek and peek-a-boo). There are even baby-racing contests. (Betting is entirely optional.) What makes Babysitting Mama especially unusual is that it comes with a plush doll; you play the game by placing the Wii Remote inside the doll and then handling the doll as if it were a real infant. The remote's speaker even emits baby sounds. Most importantly, though, Babysitting Mama teaches a valuable lesson: most of the NP crew would make lousy parents. —**CHRIS H.**

Wii PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **COOKING MAMA LTD.**
RELEASE DATE: **HOLIDAY 2010**





[Below] Justin squares off against the baby in an epic staring contest.



SENGOKU BASARA: SAMURAI HEROES

Japanese history as told by madmen

READY
85 Hits!
165 KOs

Ieyasu Tokugawa
READY
97 Hits!
499 KOs

OK, WE'LL ADMIT IT: the first time we saw Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes, we thought it was just another Samurai Warriors-type game. After all, like Tecmo Koei's franchise, Capcom's Sengoku Basara has you cutting swathes through legions of enemies in Japan during the Warring States period. And like Tecmo Koei's game, this title features characters that are loosely based on actual historical figures—but Capcom has taken this idea to a whole new level. Director Makoto Yamamoto explains: "So first we took a few points from the actual real people that lived back in the 16th-century period and then from those few points we decided, 'OK, what do we want these guys to be in the game? Let's make them our own.' So the names are similar and there's a few points, but it's not necessarily how they were in real life. It was just a stepping stone—real facts about them, then just let's go crazy. Let's take 1 and make it 100. Let's blow it up, make it grand and amazing and very manga-inspired. Tadakatsu Honda would be the easiest one to understand. He looks just like a robot, but he's actually a human being. In real life, he took part in 57 battles and was never injured once. So, you have to make him a robot! There's no other option! He's invincible if he's gonna look like a robot—gonna have lots of armor and everything. We took this one thing—he was invincible—let's make it tenfold. Let's make it crazy. We did that for every single character."

This manga-inspired craziness runs throughout Sengoku Basara. You have characters such as Magoichi Saica, a mercenary armed to the teeth with anachronistic firearms. She blasts enemies with a shotgun and pistols, and can unleash a crowd-clearing Basara Art in which she twirls around while firing machine guns, then uses a rocket launcher to finish off anyone who's left. Then you have prisoner Kanbe Kuroda, who uses the massive ball and chain cuffed to his wrists to smash foes. He is tasked with chasing a retreating enemy when he falls into a trap. The words "Tiger Time" flash onscreen and, well, a large tiger appears. —**JUSTIN C.**

Wii **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2010

Mitsunari Ishida may look relatively normal, but he's impossibly fast.

Ieyasu Tokugawa
73 Hits!
Squad Leader
485 KOs

Wii PARTY

There's a party in your Wii and everyone's invited!

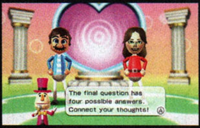
PARTY GAMES ARE a dime a dozen on the Wii console, but Wii Party might be the only one you need. The game covers just about any situation one could think of–games for groups of up to four players, games for couples, games in which you physically interact with other players or your environment, and even games designed for solo play; there are more than 15 modes in all.

Though the modes offer wildly varied structures, ranging from a board-game-style competition to a variation on bingo to a memory-based matching game, almost all of the contests revolve around pick-up-and-play minigames starring your Mii characters. Depending on what mode you're playing, you could end up in a four-player free-for-all in which everyone is trying to navigate a maze, putt golf balls, or run through a herd of sheep, or you could find yourself cooperating with another player to catch fish, pop balloons while riding a roller coaster, or corner a pesky mouse.

The most unusual games don't even focus on the onscreen action; called House Party games, these activities feature real-world interaction. In Hide 'n' Hunt, for example, you hide your Wii Remotes and challenge your friends to find them (they emit sounds to provide clues), and in Time Bomb you carefully pass the Wii Remote back and forth between players while holding down specific buttons.

With more than 70 minigames, and play mechanics that are suited for participants of any skill level, Wii Party could be the prime attraction at your next shindig. **—CHRIS H.**

Wii
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **ND CUBE**
RELEASE: **FALL 2010**

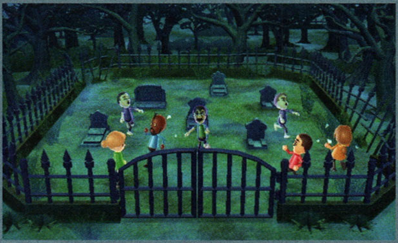

The final question has four possible answers. Connect your thoughts!

[Above] Can this mustachioed gent make a love connection?

A MULTITUDE OF MINIGAMES

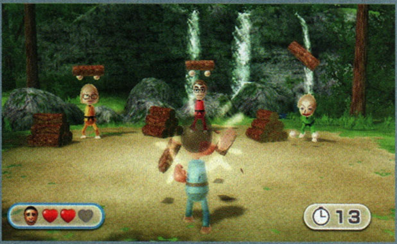
You want minigames? Wii Party's got plenty. Here are some examples of the different types of minigames you'll encounter.

4 PLAYER: ZOMBIE TAG



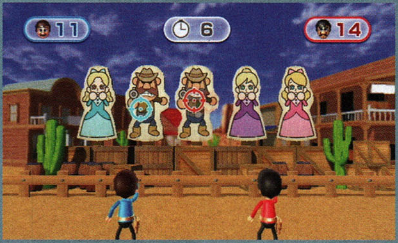
The goal is to avoid being touched by a zombie, but if you fail you can chase other players and infect them.

1 VS. 3: LUMBER WHACKER



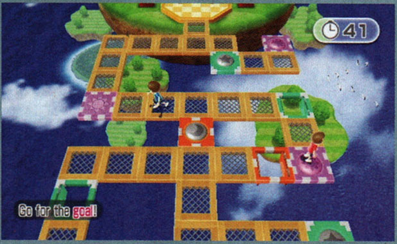
Three players toss logs at the fourth player, who shakes his Wii Remote to smash the logs with his bare hands!

1 VS. 1: POP-UP BANDITS



Take aim and blast the bad guys as they appear. Just don't get too trigger-happy and shoot the innocent bystanders.

PAIR: COLOR COORDINATION



Go for the goal!

This minigame is similar to switch puzzles in adventure games. Two players must press buttons to open paths for each other.

BY **STEVE THOMASON**

PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE** DEVELOPER: **JUNCTION POINT** RELEASE: **HOLIDAY 2010**

Wii

The FORGOTTEN ~~Wonderful~~ World of Disney

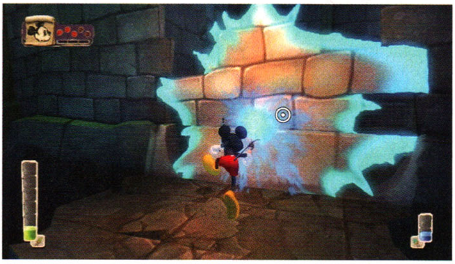
We're not in the Magic Kingdom anymore. Acclaimed developer Warren Spector takes entertainment's biggest star on a bold new journey in Epic Mickey.

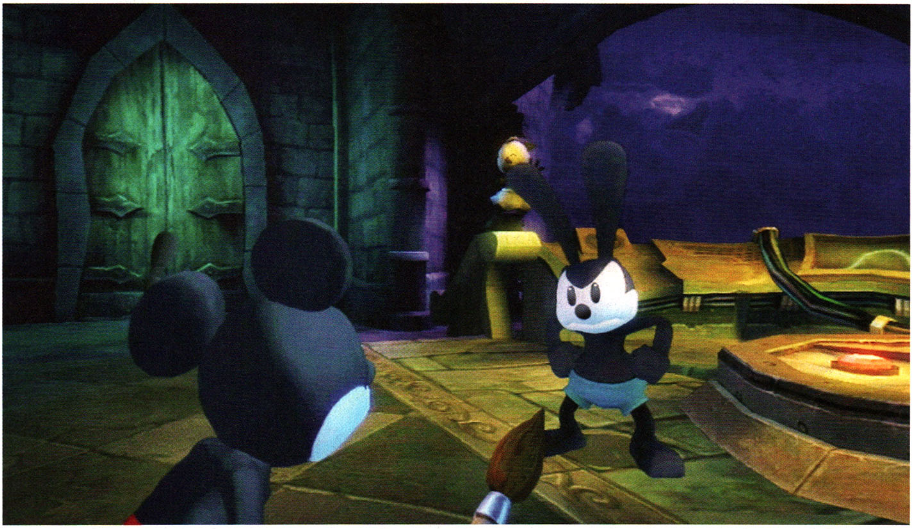
Everyone knows Mickey Mouse. One could argue that no other fictional character is more deeply ingrained in the public consciousness. Yet for the past 30 years or so, this beloved icon has coasted on past accomplishments and served as little more than a corporate mascot. Looking for a way to reinvigorate their most famous creation, the folks at Disney turned to legendary game designer Warren Spector. On the surface, it seems an odd paring given Spector's penchant for working on mature, story-driven titles like System Shock and Deus Ex. What many gamers may not realize, however, is that he's also a lifelong cartoon aficionado and an avid collector of Disney paraphernalia. So despite some trepidation about the enormity of the task, Spector and his team at Junction Point accepted the challenge and began work on Epic Mickey, exclusively for the Wii console. The game has been among our most eagerly anticipated since it was unveiled last fall, so we jumped at the opportunity to visit Junction Point's offices in Austin, Texas for an exclusive look at some never-before-seen content.

That content includes the game's beautiful CG introduction, which sets the stage for this ambitious tale. It begins with Mickey resting peacefully in bed until some unseen force stirs him from his sleep and lures him through a magic mirror. On the other side, our protagonist stumbles upon the workshop of a benevolent sorcerer named Yen Sid. As Mickey hides from view, Yen Sid is putting the finishing touches on his latest creation—a realm for cartoons that have been forgotten. This world is represented by an intricate model that sits on his table. When the sorcerer retires for the evening, our mischievous mouse takes a closer look at the model and starts to play with the magical paintbrush that Yen Sid used to craft it. Mickey accidently spills paint and thinner on the newly minted world, unleashing a monstrous being known as the Phantom Blot. Yen Sid hears the commotion and returns to his workshop, but Mickey hurriedly flees through the mirror before he can be discovered.

A long time passes—as illustrated by a montage of famous cartoon clips that spans Mickey's entire career—until the incident becomes a distant memory. Then one morning our hero is suddenly yanked back through the mirror by the Phantom Blot. In the struggle that ensues, Mickey grabs the magic brush before being pulled into Yen Sid's model. There he finds not the idyllic world the sorcerer had envisioned, but a dark Wasteland ravaged by Mickey's own mischief all those years ago. "Though he doesn't realize it at first, Mickey caused all the turmoil here, and that's a critical part of the story," says Spector. We can't delve into too much detail about how the rest of the intro plays out, but we can reveal that it involves a tense confrontation with the game's other villain—the Mad Doctor—and contains a great little beat where Mickey Mouse and Oswald the Lucky Rabbit see each other for the first time. "I call that my Sergio Leone moment," Spector interjects with a grin.

Oswald plays an important role in the game, so for those unfamiliar with the character's intriguing real-world history, a brief recap is

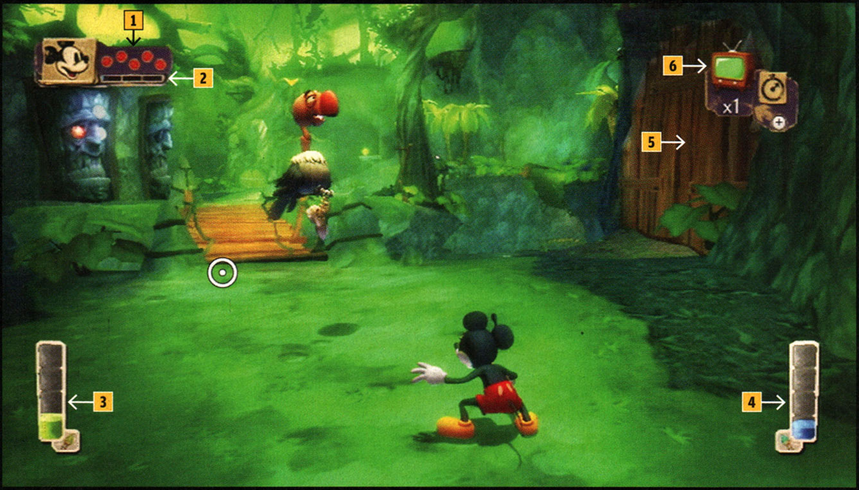




In 2006, Disney reacquired the rights to Oswald by essentially trading sportscaster Al Michaels to NBC Universal in exchange for the lucky rabbit.

Paint by Numbers

Here's a detailed look at your canvas in Epic Mickey.



1. Mickey's health

2. Guardian meter
This meter starts to turn blue if you resolve situations heroically, or green if you behave mischievously. For each box you fill, you'll summon a pixie-like guardian that can be launched like a homing missile. Blue guardians instantly befriend enemies, and green ones erase your targets.

3. Thinner supply

4. Paint supply

5. Potential escape route
If you'd rather not fight the approaching Hopper, you could erase this gate, run through the opening, then repaint the gate behind you to block your foe's pursuit.

6. Sketches
These special items serve a variety of useful purposes. The TV sketch, for instance, can distract certain adversaries with a classic cartoon.

in order. He was created by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks for a series of black-and-white animated shorts distributed by Universal Pictures in the 1920s. The cartoons were Disney's biggest success to date, but Universal owned the rights to the character. When the studio demanded budget cuts in 1928, Walt Disney refused and reluctantly walked away from his lucky rabbit. Later that year, he and Iwerks created Mickey Mouse. One character went on to become a household name, while the other eventually faded into obscurity. "There were two things that really got this project started," recalls Spector. "The first was to make Mickey the hero he deserves to be in a video game. The other was the opportunity to reintroduce Oswald to the world. And that kind of opportunity doesn't come along every day."

As the first of Disney's forgotten creations, Oswald is the earliest resident of Wasteland. In the decades that follow, he's joined by other discarded elements from throughout Disney history. "Then Mickey shows up," explains Spector. "And his first thought is, 'I'm not forgotten. I'm not rejected. I don't belong here.' So initially, his goal is just to get back home. But he discovers forgotten friends, like the old black-and-white version of Horace Horsecollar. Then there's Oswald, the brother he never even knew existed. So his goals change—he has to help them. Especially since he's the one who created the problem [with the Phantom Blot]. They're forgotten and rejected, which is sad, but he inadvertently made their lives much, much worse."

ARTISTIC CHOICES

Mickey's primary tool on this quest is the magic brush, which he can use to manipulate the game's world. In terms of gameplay, it works more like a hose than a brush—you aim at your target via the Wii Remote controller then hold the B Button to trigger a stream of paint, or the Z Button to apply thinner. You can also tap either button to fire a shotgun-like splash of the corresponding substance; the range isn't as good, but it covers a wider area and the force knocks back foes.

How you choose to wield the brush has meaningful consequences throughout the game, as do the rest of your actions. That's in keeping with Junction Point's mantra of "Playstyle Matters," which has long been a driving force behind Spector's work. As he describes it, "The overall story plays out in a pretty linear fashion—I'm a big believer in linear storytelling that progresses from beat to beat in the same way for all players. But *how* each player progresses can and will change based on his or her choices. I think that approach offers players control over the elements of gameplay that are important to them, but still allows them to participate in the telling of a cool story." Asked to give an example, Spector refers to the Skull Island level that Disney showcased at E3. There, players could discover a machine that was transforming Captain Hook's pirates into minions of the Phantom Blot. "How you choose to interact with that machine determines who lives in Ventureland when you go back to revisit it later in the game," Spector reveals. "The first time you visit, there are a bunch of scared pirates

continued on page 64

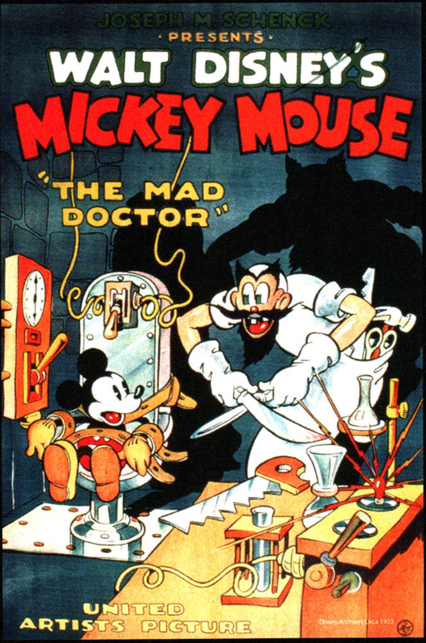
Epic Villains

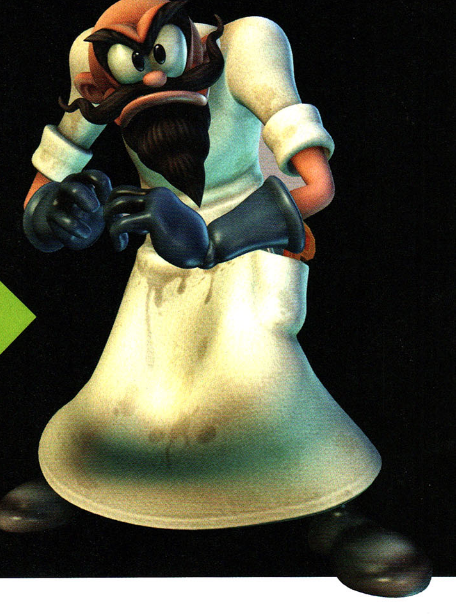
Every good hero needs a villain—or in this case, a pair of villains. Below, creative director Warren Spector discusses the inspiration for Mickey's foils and their role in the story.

THE MAD DOCTOR

"[In the game's backstory,] the Mad Doctor is actually one of the earliest characters to show up in Wasteland. His cartoon was from 1933 and he was forgotten almost instantly. He was one of the few characters Disney didn't reuse. Even though they're forgotten now, Horace Horsecollar and Clarabelle Cow, for instance, appeared over and over again. The Mad Doctor: one shot and he was done.

"So he shows up in Wasteland pretty early on. Oswald's the first guy to arrive. Oswald's girlfriend shows up not long after. Then the Mad Doctor appears. As in the cartoon, he's a crazy, power-mad seeker of forbidden knowledge. [When he arrives in Wasteland,] he looks around and says, 'OK, Oswald's in charge here, so I'll suck up to him.' He becomes Oswald's right-hand guy. Together, they conceive the idea of the Beetleworx. The Beetleworx are monsters by the time you confront them in the game, but their initial purpose was to act as construction tools. When something new that's been forgotten or rejected appears in Wasteland, the job of the Beetleworx is to go out there, gather it up, and move it to wherever Oswald wants it. They follow Oswald's orders. What Oswald doesn't know is that the Mad Doctor is making his own secret plans on the side. And there comes a point where the Phantom Blot shows up. He's this huge monster that basically ravages Wasteland. There's a period in the backstory that we call The Blot Wars. As the Blot becomes the dominant force—he's winning the war—the Mad Doctor looks around and thinks, 'Huh, [do I side with the] little rabbit or the big scary monster with lots of minions?' So he hatches yet another scheme and ultimately betrays Oswald. He becomes the Blot's closest ally, though he still has plans of his own. So that's kind of the Mad Doctor's story. He and Oswald create the Beetleworx. They're rebuilding this world and making it a nice place for all these characters to live while they're waiting to be rediscovered. Then the Blot shows up thanks to Mickey's mischief, and the Mad Doctor turns."



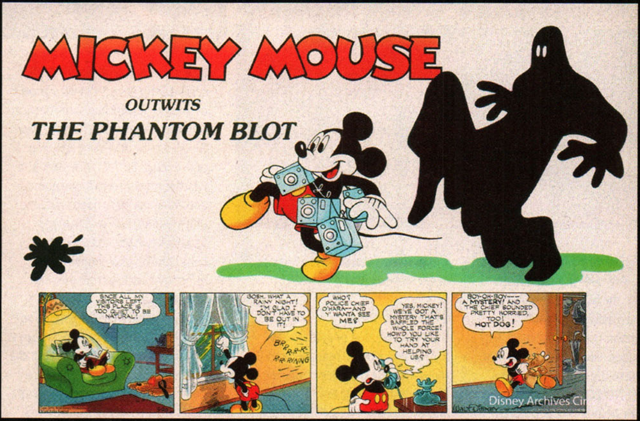


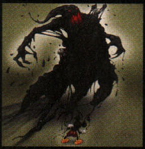
As you can see, the Mad Doctor as he appears in the game (right) is pretty faithful to the original 1933 cartoon (left).

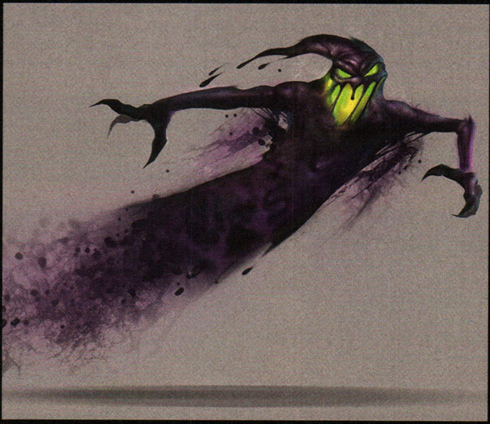
THE PHANTOM BLOT

“The Phantom Blot was created by Floyd Gottfredson, who is one of my favorite comic book writers and artists of all time. In 1939, he did a strip, which I think lasted a couple of months, called “Mickey Mouse Outwits the Phantom Blot.” So here you have one of my idols—a man who really understood Mickey as an action hero and an adventurer better than anyone else—pitting him against a guy in a black sheet who steals cameras. [Laughs] I mean, that’s what the Blot does! He says, ‘Curses, 10,000 curses’ because a camera is not the one he wants. He needs a specific camera. So here is this god among comic-book writers creating a villain who just doesn’t cut it.

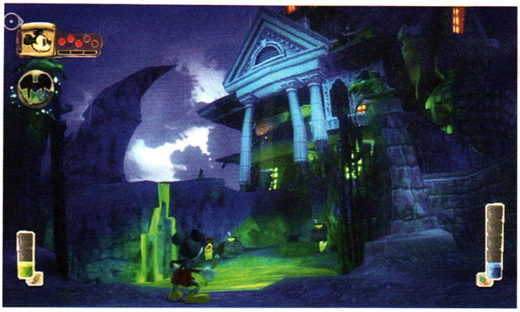
“I love Floyd Gottfredson, but what we’ve done with the Phantom Blot is a little different. He’s kind of a force of nature. He is not a thinking character. The tragedy of the Blot…I learned a really important thing from John Lasseter. He told me that when *Toy Story* really came to life—when they really understood it at Pixar—is when they figured out that the key question they had to ask was, ‘What does a toy want?’ Well, toys want to be played with. And that was the foundation for everything in the movie. So he looked at me and said, ‘What does a cartoon want?’ And I went, ‘Umm…I don’t know.’ It was a great question. So I thought about it, and what we came up with is a cartoon character wants four things: to be drawn, to be animated and brought to life, to be projected and seen by an audience, and, finally, to be loved. If you think about it, Mickey has all four. Oswald had all four, but lost them. The Mad Doctor had three, but he was never loved. And the Blot [in our game] had none of them. He’s a mistake. And he’s aware enough to know that. So that’s what makes him a monster. What he can do is erase things. He has all of the same abilities Mickey has. But he can also sort of suck the life out of cartoons. He can absorb the paint and leave an inert shell. And when he absorbs the paint from a cartoon character, he kind of gains some dim knowledge of their desires. So he comes to want what they wanted. He wants to be a cartoon character. That’s his motivation. And the Mad Doctor exploits that. He says, ‘I can help you get out of here and get what you want. I can send you out of Wasteland and you’ll become the cartoon star that you want to be.’ Maybe it’s a lie, maybe it’s not. So that’s their relationship; the Mad Doctor is sort of tempting the Blot. You’ve got the brains and the brawn. And I hope the Blot gives kids nightmares. I really do.”

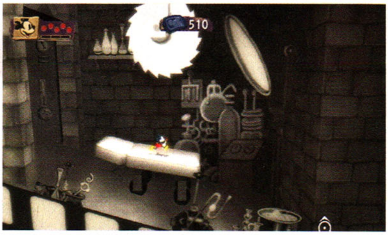

MICKEY MOUSE
OUTWITS
THE PHANTOM BLOT
SINCE ALL MY VISITORS LEFT, THIS PLACE IS TOO QUIET TO BE NATURAL!
GOSH, WHAT A RAINY NIGHT! I'M GLAD I DON'T HAVE TO BE OUT IN IT!
BRRRR-R-R-R-R-RING
WHO? POLICE CHIEF O'HARA--AND Y' WANTA SEE ME?
YES, MICKEY! WE'VE GOT A MYSTERY THAT'S BAFFLED THE WHOLE FORCE! HOW'D YOU LIKE TO TRY YOUR HAND AT HELPING US?
BOY-OH-BOY--- A MYSTERY! AND THE CHIEF SOUNDED PRETTY WORRIED, TOO! HOT DOG!
WALT DISNEY
Disney Archives Ci





Junction Point went through quite a few different concepts for the Blot before settling on the above. Spector claims the artwork on the left was close but looked too solid. He wanted the villain to have the same consistency as Nickelodeon slime.





[Left] Mickey gazes upon the foreboding facade of Lonesome Manor.

there, worrying about their buddies who've been turned into monsters and worried that they might be next. If you ignore their pleas to shut down the machine, when you return to Ventureland later in the game, the place might be deserted. So obviously there are no quests to learn about, no shops to sell you tools and upgrades, no characters to give you information, etc. If you destroy the machine [using thinner], you might find more friendly folks to interact with upon your return to Ventureland, but if you repaired the machine [using paint and thus reverting the monsters back to pirates], you might find even happier folks there. That sort of thing plays out all over the game."

Levels are divided into three types. The aforementioned Ventureland is an example of a quest map. As Spector touched on, these are essentially hubs where Mickey can interact with his fellow 'toons, shop for items, and take on various side quests. Action maps comprise the bulk of the game and combine platforming, exploration, and combat. Last but not least are travel maps, which transition from one area to the next and take the form of brief 2D side-scrollers based on classic Disney shorts. "The travel maps are kind of a palate cleanser between the 3D maps," Spector tells us. "They're a fun way to let players experience Mickey in a different light and present something the feels sort of like a classic Mario game."

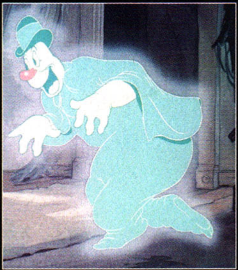
DANGER MOUSE

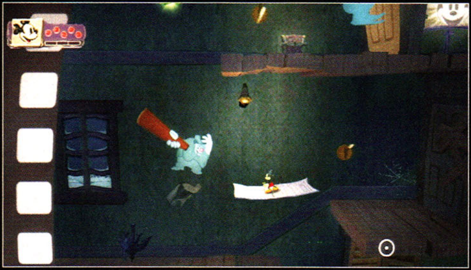
Our exclusive tour of Epic Mickey begins with a travel map inspired by the wonderful 1937 short *Lonesome Ghosts*. The cartoon features Mickey, Donald, and Goofy as ghost exterminators lured to a haunted house by a group of bored poltergeists posing as customers. (It's worth noting that upon entering the estate, Goofy utters the immortal words, "I ain't scared of no ghosts!") Every aspect of this game level has some basis in the source material. The newspaper the ghosts read at the beginning of the short, for instance, acts as a windblown platform in the game, and when our hero hops on it, one of the apparitions materializes to whack him with a two-by-four. Other ghosts play similar tricks to prevent Mickey from passing through, but you can scare them away by switching on the lights with a flick of the Wii Remote. Some great vintage sound effects round out the presentation. Though it takes only a few minutes to complete most of these travel maps, each presents you with branching paths. One route leads directly to your destination, while the other rewards you with some sort of collectible if you survive

From the Vault

Almost everything you'll see in Epic Mickey was influenced by some aspect of Disney lore.

LONESOME GHOSTS



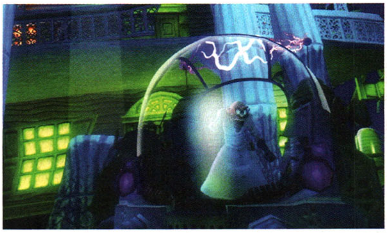


One of the side-scroling stages in the game is based on the 1937 short *Lonesome Ghosts* and includes faithful recreations of the cartoon's titular poltergeists.

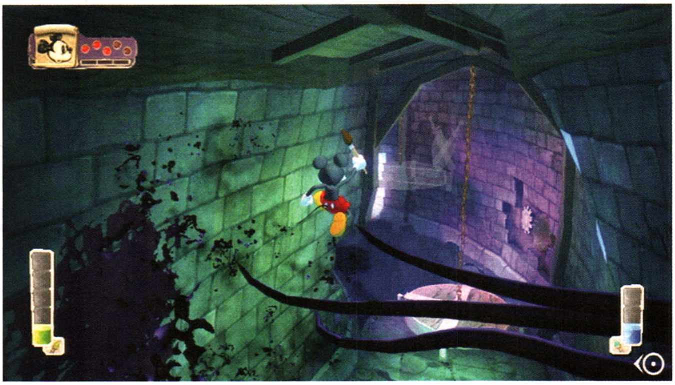
its additional perils. We take the risk and snag a film reel in this particular stage, but Spector is mum on the prize's function.

From there, we arrive at an action map called Lonesome Manor. "This one is inspired by the Haunted Mansion," Spector points out. "There's a Haunted Mansion in every [Disney] park, but they're all a bit different. So we took elements from each of them and sort of mashed them all together." Your objective here is pretty straightforward: for reasons that are important to the story (but that we can't reveal), Mickey has to get into the mansion. "Even with the simple goals, though, we always strive to give players optional areas and spaces to explore," lead game designer Chase Jones informs us. "If I want to be a completionist, I'll be able to get more from the game. But some people might get here and say, 'I just want to get into the mansion.'"

Our first example of that comes right away as the stage begins next to a pond filled with thinner. We can see a treasure chest on the other side, but there's no discernable way to reach it at first. As we proceed up the adjacent hill, we come to a pressure plate on the ground, and above it an anvil hangs from a tree branch. Erasing the tree drops the anvil on the plate, which causes platforms to emerge from the pond. At this point, we can either keep moving toward the mansion or go back and try to snag that treasure. We choose the latter, only to discover that there's more than thinner standing between us and the booty: namely, a pair of enemies called Spladooshes. This rotund variety of Blotling (malicious creatures spawned from the Phantom Blot) sits around snoozing, but if you get too close and wake one up, it will explode. We accidently alert the first Spladoosh, and the resulting blast sends Mickey flying into the pool of thinner. We're more careful sneaking past the second Blotling and eventually we manage to reach the chest. (Inside is a pin, another collectible for which Spector won't divulge the purpose.)



[Left] The Mad Doctor's ship was inspired by Disney-themed snow globes, which decorate every corner of Junction Point's offices.

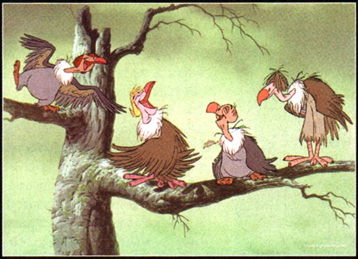


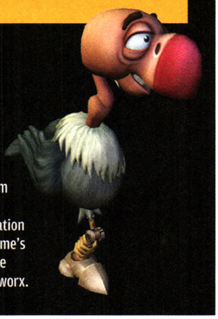
Heading back toward the manor, it strikes us just how great the game looks. The lighting, texture work, and animation have all come a long way since the first screens that were revealed. Beyond the technical achievements, there are all sorts of little flourishes that really bring the world to life. When we reach the front of the manor, for example, a bunch of spooky eyes peer at us from the darkness beneath the porch. "The Imagineers do that kind of stuff all the time," says Spector. "It's just such a Disney thing to do."

Near the manor is another pressure plate, only there's no anvil conveniently hanging over this one. Standing on it opens the estate's front door, but the entrance slams shut again as soon as Mickey steps off the plate. We take a look around and notice that we can reach the manor's second-story veranda be erasing the top of a pillar and using the remaining portion as a platform. Doing so leads us to a chest that contains an anvil sketch. Players will find a variety of sketches throughout the game, and Mickey can bring them to life using the magic brush.

"But you have to weigh the best use of that resource," Spector points out. "Maybe you'll want to use it as a platform to get to somewhere that you couldn't reach before. Or do you need it to weigh down a pressure plate and open a door that you wouldn't be able to otherwise? Or do you need to crush a Beetleworx that's giving you trouble? I love the Zelda games, but typically the tools, which are one of the things I love about them, are useful in just one way or only in the places where the developers want them to be useful. Our goal is different. We have fewer tools, but they're all useful

THUMPER BEETLEWORX





The vultures from *The Jungle Book* served as inspiration for one of the game's enemy types—the Thumper Beetleworx.

Odds and Ends

Still hungry for more Epic Mickey info? So were we! Fortunately, creative director Warren Spector was kind enough to comment on some other topics we had on our minds.

NINTENDO POWER Who's composing the music for the title and what was the overall approach you wanted to take with the soundtrack?

WARREN SPECTOR I'm so glad you asked about this. The guy doing the music for us is Jim Dooley. He's amazing. I mean, the guy won an Emmy for best original soundtrack a couple of years back for his work on *Pushing Daisies*. Before we settled on Jim as the perfect person for the job, we auditioned several other composers—wonderful composers all, making the decision really agonizing. In the end, though, Jim managed to capture the spirit of the game better than anyone else. I kept on saying I wanted the music to "sound like Disney music," even though I couldn't really describe exactly what I meant by that. There's just some hard-to-define quality that marks a piece as being a Disney piece, whether it's from the 1930s or the 1980s or the 2010s. It's a spirit, and an approach to orchestration and, well, I don't really know. Jim knew. And I said I wanted music that sounded familiar yet strange. And Jim nailed that. And I said I wanted music that sounded like (pick a real Disney tune) but turned inside out. And Jim understood what I was asking for. Plus he has this incredibly distinctive style that I absolutely adore. I don't believe I've ever made a game with music as evocative and joyful as this. I even listen to it on my iPod all the time, for grins!

When the game was first revealed, you talked about mechanized recreations of Mickey's buddies (Donald, Goofy, etc.). Are those still in the game, and if so, can you talk a little bit about their role and how they work?

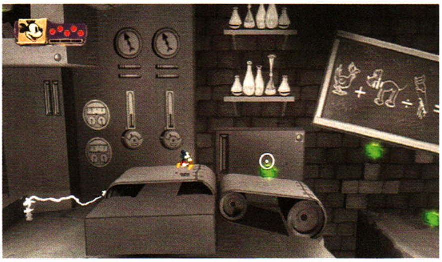
Animatronic versions of Mickey's pals are very much a part of the game. How you interact with them plays a role in how your story, and Oswald's, plays out. Honestly, though, I don't want to say much more than that. Let's leave some surprises for later!

We love the style you guys chose for the cinematics. What was the inspiration for those and how did you come to that particular approach?

We didn't want to make a super-dialogue-intensive game, so to tell our story, we knew we'd need some compelling cinematic sequences. And we really wanted to underscore the idea that the game was based on real elements from Disney's past and that we were inspired by the Disney creative process. We had an outfit called Powerhouse working on storyboards for these sequences—they're an animation house in Austin with whom I'd done some work in the past—and it just dawned on us that their storyboard style could translate directly to the game. I mean, what's more a part of the creative process in animation than storyboarding? Once we had that idea in mind, we started polishing the storyboard sequences up and adding life and movement to them—we couldn't just do a slide show! They quickly became storyboards "brought to life." And then, for the final art style, we drew inspiration from the marvelous concept art of a Disney legend, Mary Blair (whose work on *Alice in Wonderland* and, with Imagineering, on the It's a Small World Ride, is quite well known). Put all that together, and you have what I think is one of the coolest approaches to cinematic storytelling I've seen in a game.

in a bunch of different ways. And they're expendable, so you have to decide when to use them." He mentions that certain sketches will do different things if you combine them with one another, but he doesn't want to go into specifics. "I'd rather players make those discoveries on their own," Spector explains. "That's half the fun."

In this situation, of course, we need to place the anvil on the pressure plate to open the manor's entrance and complete our main objective. That task is made a bit more difficult when a group of Blotlings shows up, giving us our first real taste of combat. Thanks to the magic brush, Mickey has a couple of different options for dealing with enemies. He can erase them using thinner or befriend them with a coat of paint. The first option can produce health, sketches, or other resources, whereas the second compels the Blotlings to fight alongside our hero. We go with the conciliatory approach then drop the anvil on the pressure plate and head inside the manor. (Actually, we uncovered a couple of other hidden rooms first, but we agree with Spector that discovering them on your own is half the fun).

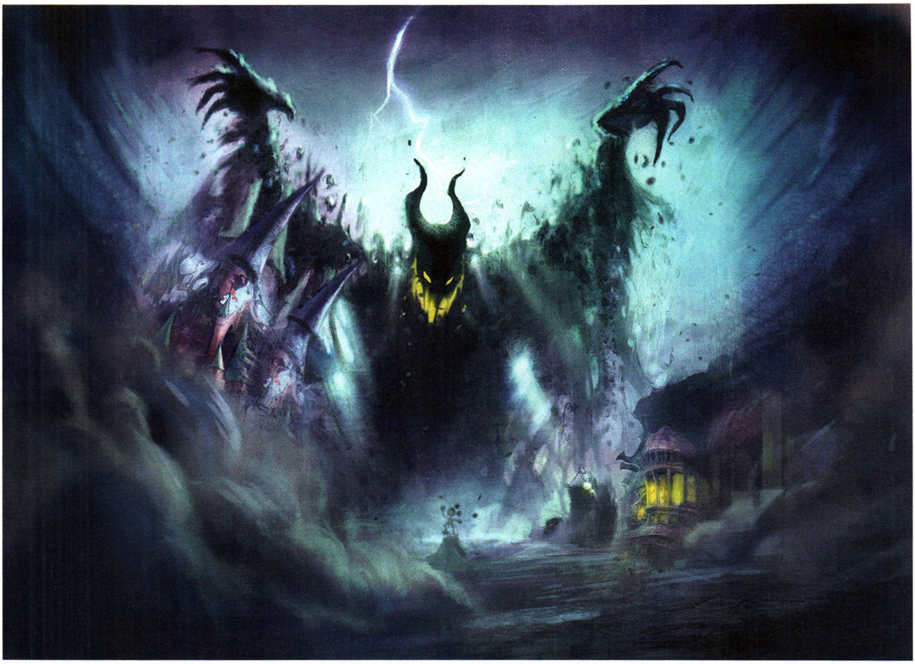


Another travel map follows, based on a 1933 short entitled *The Mad Doctor*. "That cartoon was hugely important," Spector notes. "There have been a few inspirations for this game, but *The Mad Doctor* was a major one." (As previously mentioned, the titular physician even serves as one of Epic Mickey's main villains; see page 62 for more on his role.) In the course of the short, Mickey has to contend with a bridge that collapses as he runs across it, stairs that fold up underneath him and send him sliding back down, and whirling buzz saws that nearly dissect him—all elements that lend themselves perfectly to the level in the game. "It's amazing," enthuses Spector. "It's almost like they designed a platformer without realizing it."

OF BUCCANEERS AND BUNNIES

For the next stop on our tour, Junction Point shows us a jungle-themed action map that comes quite a bit later in the game. This one is inspired by *The Jungle Book*, naturally, as well as the Lost Boys' hideout in *Peter Pan*. Almost immediately upon entering the level, we're set upon by a type of Beetleworx called a Basher. Beetleworx are especially formidable enemies constructed by the Mad Doctor. They operate as the Phantom Blot's shock troops and consist of a mechanical frame covered in a cartoon shell. You have to erase the shell to expose the mechanism's weak point, which you can then smack with Mickey's brush by shaking the Wii Remote. Certain sketches are also effective against them, but you can't use paint to befriend a Beetleworx.

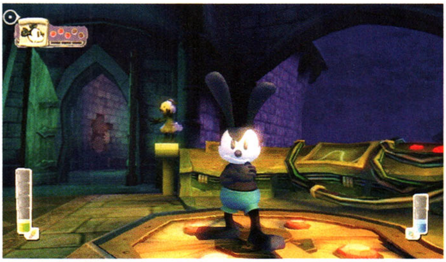
After distracting the Basher with a television sketch, we run into Starkey, one of Captain Hook's pirates. Jones reveals, "As Mickey travels from Ventureland into this level, he starts to find out that there are pirates who stayed behind throughout Wasteland—the ones who didn't flee to Ventureland for safety. They stayed back to stand up to the menace in their world and try to win back what was theirs." Starkey explains that he can't leave his post while the Blot's forces are still about, so he offers the mouse a deal. If



Mickey clears the area of threats, the pirate will give him the pass code for Hangman's Tree (which is our hero's next destination). Alternatively, you can look for the code on your own; the symbols have been scrawled on moss-covered rocks scattered across the stage, and erasing the foliage will reveal the marks.

"That choice doesn't only have ramifications here; it changes things later in the game," Spector asserts. "And maybe you're the kind of player who isn't comfortable with exterminating all the enemies, but doing so will help Starkey get back home. So is it more important for you to be true to yourself or to help him get home? It's not a matter of right or wrong. It's not good or evil. It's not morality. It's a little more subtle than that."

We opt for the pacifist approach and try to avoid combat, but one Beetleworx is especially dogged in his pursuit. So as it follows us across a log that leads from one side of a valley to the other, we turn around and erase the makeshift bridge behind us, dropping the Beetleworx into the gorge below. "Yes!" exclaims Spector. "I've been waiting for someone to do that! That was a scenario I described three years ago and I finally got to see it happen."



In addition to the pass codes, there are a number of gems hidden throughout this stage (some concealed more deviously than others). Acquiring them is entirely optional, but doing so allows you to unlock the cover to a well, at the bottom of which you'll find another special collectible. And no, Spector won't tell us what this one does either.

However, he does give us a glimpse of Epic Mickey's impressive final stage: Dark Beauty Castle. It takes all of about two seconds to realize that bad things are about to go down here; through the giant holes in the ceiling, we can see foreboding storm clouds swirling around the castle unnaturally (and it's a pretty awe-inspiring sight). After climbing a flight of stairs, we come to a control room where Oswald waits. The rabbit shows Mickey the way forward, which indicates that the two are clearly working together at this point, but we notice something that speaks volumes about their relationship. When you have Mickey turn his back to Oswald, the rabbit starts making faces at him. Then when the mouse turns around, Oswald looks away and whistles innocently. It's a great little touch that capsulizes what Epic Mickey is all about.

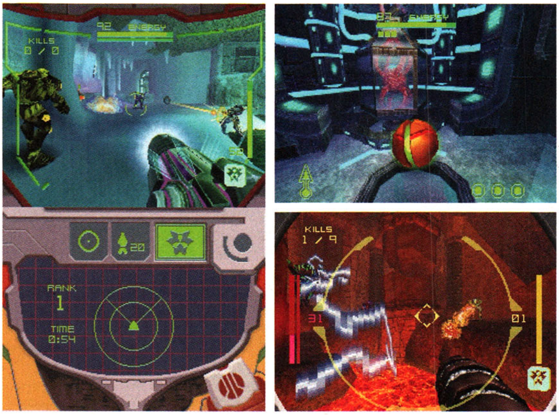
Some tricky platforming follows as we continue to ascend the castle, requiring not only quick reflexes but adept use of the paint and thinner. The world has started to crumble beneath Mickey's feet, and to make matters worse, the Blot's tendrils are coming through the walls and constantly trying to snag our hero. "I don't want to say too much, but the Blot is having his way at this point," Spector explains. "The world is in deep, deep trouble, and Mickey and Oswald have to stop him. What we've shown of the Blot thus far barely scratches the surface."

The same could likely be said of the game as a whole. Epic Mickey is the most ambitious Wii title we've seen in ages, and as our demo comes to a close, we get the feeling we've only begun to see what Junction Point has in store. We can't wait to discover the rest.

From the best boss to the best game, Nintendo Power picks the highlights of the epic *Metroid* series.

ULTIMATE METROID

Since it began captivating players more than 20 years ago, the Metroid series has been recognized as one of the greatest franchises in video games; when it comes to sci-fi action-adventures, Metroid is the stick by which other games are measured. But how do the games stack up to each other? Which one is the best? With the imminent release of Metroid: Other M for the Wii console, we thought it would be the perfect time to take a look at back at the series and make that judgment. On the following pages, we not only rank every installment of the series (from the original Metroid up through Metroid Prime 3: Corruption), but also select the games' best aspects—including our favorite weapon, enemy, ability, and more—to pay respect to the components that have made the Metroid saga so exceptional. And if you want to know how Metroid: Other M stacks up, be sure to check out the review on page 84.



Metroid Prime Hunters

9

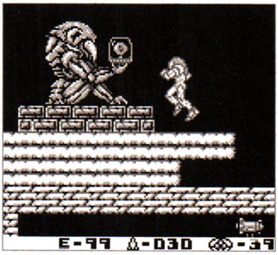
When the Nintendo DS system debuted in 2004, early adopters were treated to a packed-in demo of Metroid Prime Hunters, subtitled First Hunt. It proved the fledgling handheld as a viable platform for first-person-perspective gaming. The final version of Hunters surfaced in 2006 touting a relatively short single-player adventure and multiplayer arena battles for up to four via Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, along with a voice-chat feature. Samus was just one of seven bounty hunters tearing up the game's space-station locations, and each had similarly crafty abilities. Why doesn't the game rank higher on our list? The emphasis on the multiplayer experience makes it less of a classic Metroid adventure than the rest, and control proved to be a little unwieldy.

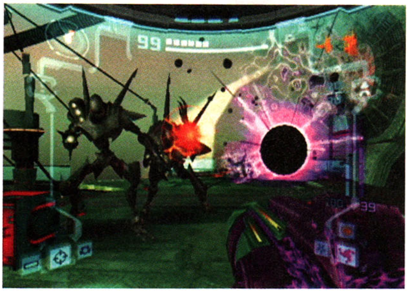
Metroid II: Return of Samus

8

When it was the only handheld Metroid on the block, volume two of the original saga held up all right. It's been a while since then, though, and subsequent games raised the bar pretty high. The graphics and stages couldn't help but be repetitive—you can ask only so much from the original Game Boy—and that emphasized problems with the level layout and scenario design. Every Metroid has a couple of spots where it's easy to hit the wall and get completely stuck, but Metroid II happened to be especially nasty in that department.

Return of Samus has its memorable moments, though, especially the introduction of the charming little Metroid larva. He wouldn't really have his day until Super Metroid, but he sure looks cute on the small screen.





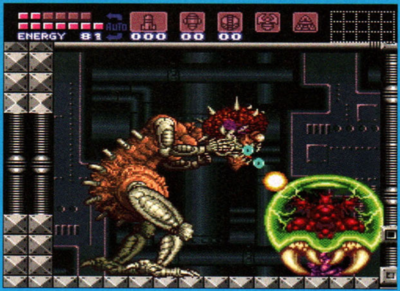
7 Metroid Prime 2: Echoes

Prime 2 might be a better game than this ranking suggests, if you look at it in a vacuum. It suffered a bit from coming out relatively soon after the breakthrough of the first Metroid Prime, though. They're very much alike in some regards, and the sequel amplified some of the weaker points of the original. The quest for the Sky Temple Keys, as an example, was very much like the Chozo Artifact search, and it was even less enjoyable the second time around.

Nonetheless, Echoes is worth playing, beyond a doubt, for its grim, moody atmosphere and some very creative level designs. The rest of the Metroid Prime trilogy just happens to be a fair bit better.

MOST DRAMATIC MOMENT: THE BABY METROID'S SACRIFICE

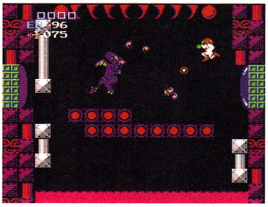
16-bit graphics and sound can convey only so much emotion, but there's something genuinely poignant about the end of Super Metroid, when the lost Metroid larva rescued by Samus in Metroid II finally figures out who the good guys are and gives its life to stop Mother Brain. At the time, it gave a real sense of closure to the original chapter of the Metroid saga, and it still makes an impact today.

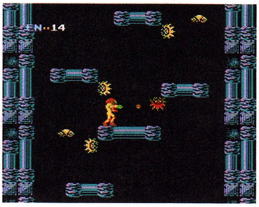


6 Metroid

Launching on the NES stateside shortly after the debut of The Legend of Zelda, Metroid combined platforming with world exploration to make an adventure that was thoroughly unique for its time and has been the template for dozens of games since. Samus Aran jumped, rolled and fired lasers and missiles with an inventive control scheme that took full advantage of the Control Pad and two buttons. Named for the fearsome energy-sucking Metroids (which Samus takes on in the game's final act), the game broke new console ground with its atmosphere and exploration-heavy platforming, plus it was among the first console adventure with a female lead character.

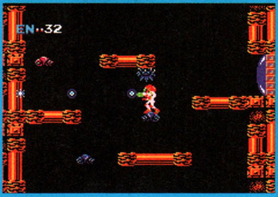
Old-school players may see the series originator's number-six ranking as an injustice, but the game does show its age; after all, it was improved in every conceivable way (including the much-needed addition of an in-game map) by Metroid: Zero Mission on Game Boy Advance. Furthermore, its place on the list is a testament to the innovation that it inspired in the Metroid games that followed.





BEST WEAPON: ICE BEAM

There are flashier weapons (the Wave Beam) and there are deadlier weapons (the many missile-launcher varieties). But when you want to go out and get the job done, as likely as not you pick up this old favorite. The Ice Beam is handy on defense and potent on offense, and it's the perfect platforming tool—Samus has hopped around on the backs of frozen bad guys in nearly every one of her adventures.



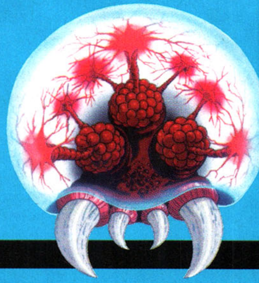
5

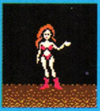
Metroid Fusion

Though it's often pegged as a handheld variation on Super Metroid, Metroid Fusion is in many ways the odd man out. It's the most story-driven of the Metroids, to be sure, especially for a 2D handheld game, and it's less about tramping all over hell's half-acre than getting to the target and getting the job done. Whether you like the more linear, direct arrangement of Fusion's objectives is mostly a matter of taste. It's hard to argue against the game's graphics, though. This is one of the most impressively colorful Metroid titles, and the technology that powered its slick, detailed visuals later gave us Metroid: Zero Mission as well.

BEST ENEMY: METROID

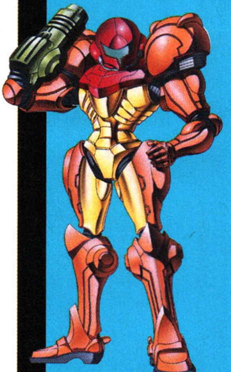
Well, who else is going to take this one? This enemy's name is on the box for a reason. There's a genuine sense of danger every time you face a Metroid, no matter when or where it happens. Suddenly those nasty little teeth latch on, the energy counter starts draining away, and all you can think is, *Get it off me! Get it off me!* Even if you've mastered the tactics for killing them, even if you've got the Ice Beam ready, they still get through sometimes.... *Augh! Get it off me!*





BEST SECRET: SAMUS IS A WOMAN!

Given that it happened almost 25 years ago, it's easy to forget how many minds got blown when the helmet came off and all that blond hair came out. Samus suddenly became the first great heroine of the 8-bit age, and one of the first female protagonists in video games period (although Ms. Pac-Man was ahead of her by a while). The infamous "JUSTIN BAILEY" code—which lets you play as an unarmored Samus without all the hard work—is a pretty cool secret in and of itself.



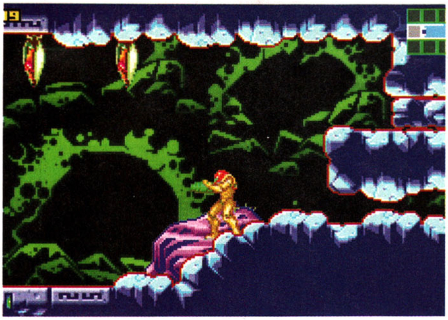
BEST ARMOR: VARIA SUIT FROM SUPER METROID

Boasting extra protective armor and the bulky, round shoulder pieces that have since become synonymous with Samus Aran, the Super NES version of the Varia Suit is the outfit that has come to define the galaxy's greatest bounty hunter. The distinctively imposing silhouette, classic color scheme, and plenty of 16-bit detail combined to create a look that sets the standard by which all others are judged. Of course, we know there are a lot of guys out there who'd prefer Samus just wear the Zero Suit....

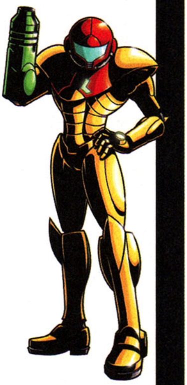
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption

4

Though it never quite reaches the towering heights of the first Metroid Prime, Corruption nonetheless stands as a phenomenal conclusion to the trilogy. The move to the Wii console brought with it enhanced controls, which demonstrated that first-person shooting could feel significantly better with the Wii Remote than with a standard controller. To showcase that, Corruption shifted the formula slightly to place a greater emphasis on action. It also offered a grander scope than its predecessors, with Samus traveling to a number of different planets and getting caught up in some awe-inspiring set pieces (like a free-fall battle with archnemesis Ridley). Three years after its release, Corruption remains one of the most visually stunning efforts on Wii, thanks in no small part to the inspired art direction that is a hallmark of the series. Retro Studios again proved its knack for crafting imaginative, cohesive worlds that beg to be explored.



3 Metroid: Zero Mission



Zero Mission is the kind of remake that gives remakes a good name. The Game Boy Advance revival of the original Metroid got it right—it held on to the essential character of a classic game while improving it in every possible way. Better graphics? Check. Deeper storytelling? Check. New bosses, new items, new areas, a whole new final level? Check, check, check, check. Eight different endings? Imagine eight "checks" here.

What's more quietly exciting is the way Zero Mission creates a bridge from the first Metroid adventure to the events of the Metroid Prime trilogy, making it feel more like those games are telling one big story. It shows us a little more of Samus Aran as a human character, too, although not so much that she loses her distant mystique.

BEST RIDLEY: META RIDLEY

In Metroid Prime, Meta Ridley got a lot of slow, scary buildup, with all sorts of visual teases and bits of research data that warn of a serious showdown in the offing. Then the big guy finally lands in the arena, and the real thing—cyborg parts and all—is much, much scarier than any of the hype. Meta Ridley is pretty awesome when he shows up in the Subspace Emissary portion of Super Smash Bros. Brawl, as well.

BEST BOSS: THE METROID PRIME

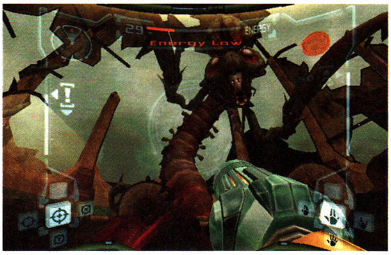
Like Meta Ridley, the final boss of Metroid Prime gets a lot of ominous foreshadowing. For most of the last quarter of the game, we're constantly warned that there's something very big down there in the Impact Crater. Still, all the warnings in the world could never have prepared us for the Metroid Prime—impossibly massive and scary as hell. Mother Brain may have been mean, but even at her worst she was never that terrifying.

2 Metroid Prime

Playing Metroid Prime felt a little strange at first. But one thought predominated: "They actually did it."

Prime spent a very long time in development, during which Metroid fans wondered if their beloved side-scrolling series would really work with a shift to a first-person perspective. This was to be the very first game from co-developer Retro Studios—was an unproven team really up to such a daunting challenge?

Then the fall of 2002 rolled around. You could feel a collective double-take ripple through the gaming world as we discovered that Metroid Prime was everything we could have hoped it would be: a powerfully immersive 3D re-creation of the classic Metroid experience. Bursts of intense action broke up a lonely journey through the bones of an ancient civilization, and the first-person view created a feeling of being there that nothing else could provide. Rarely has a series so perfectly made such a massive technological leap, but Nintendo and Retro Studios almost made it look easy.



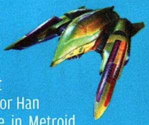
BEST ABILITY: SPIDER BALL

Everybody loves the Morph Ball. It's the signature skill behind the entire Metroid series. A Morph Ball that lets you roll up walls, though, is just that much cooler. The sticky Spider Ball, especially in some of the trickier sections of the Metroid Prime games, is the key to some ingenious and incredibly fun platforming puzzles, as well as a couple of truly thumb-busting boss battles.

BEST SELF-DESTRUCT ESCAPE: FINALE OF SUPER METROID

Super Metroid actually has two of the coolest escapes in the series. The prologue sequence on the space colony ends with a fun one, using the Mode 7 rotation effects of the Super NES to shift gravity around. What makes the final escape from Zebes so incredible, though, is that it isn't just a tense race through a collapsing planet with tricky jumps and labyrinthine corridors—it's one in which you're armed with the powerful Hyper Beam, which makes obliterating enemies ever so satisfying.

BEST SHIP: METROID PRIME 3: CORRUPTION

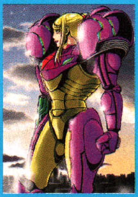


It may not have an official name, but Samus's trusty spaceship has always contributed to the bounty hunter's cool factor (sort of like the *Millennium Falcon* did for Han Solo). That is especially the case in Metroid Prime 3: Corruption, which allows you to hop in the ship's cockpit and interact with the controls via the Wii Remote controller. You can also call on the vessel remotely, either to perform bombing runs or to remove large obstacles from your path. We're still waiting for an opportunity to take the ship into battle, though.

BEST TUNE: MAIN THEME FROM METROID

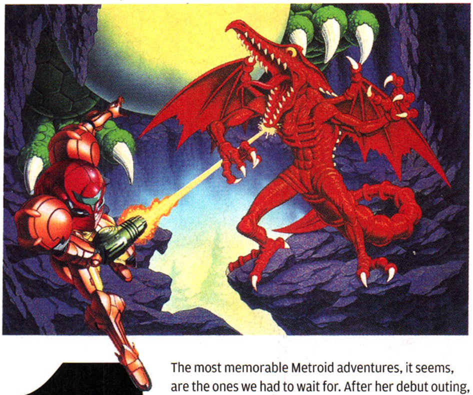
One of the coolest things about the Metroid series is its unique use of audio. The games often employ a minimalistic approach and opt for subtle music or ambient sounds that really help establish the mood. But other times the action is supplemented by something truly catchy, and it doesn't get much catchier than the main theme from the original Metroid. Rousing and heroic, the tune thoroughly sets the stage for the epic adventure to come. The remixed versions of the track in the Super Smash Bros. games make the classic song even better.

BEST ENDING: METROID: ZERO MISSION



This might be cheating a bit, because the neat thing about Zero Mission isn't the ending per se—it's how many endings the remake featured. There are no fewer than eight, depending on how many items you grab and how quickly you finish the game. They all feature some nifty different illustrations of Samus (including our heroine enjoying a well-deserved postmission drink), but the coolest image might be a still-armored Samus with her helmet off, looking into the sunrise.

Super Metroid

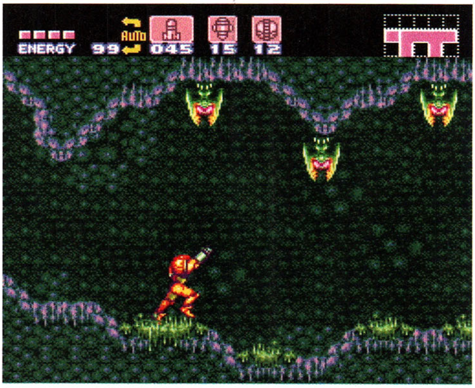


1

The most memorable Metroid adventures, it seems, are the ones we had to wait for. After her debut outing, it took almost seven years for Samus to come back to a console. When "Metroid 3" (as it's called during the game's opening sequence) arrived in 1994, though, it was worth the wait and then some.

Super Metroid, even more than the 8-bit original, defines what we think of as a Metroid game. The action is beautifully tuned, but it's not a pure action game. It's a game about exploring an alien world, about always wanting to find out what's around that next corner. The drive to progress—to knock off the bosses and gather new items—is all wound up in that need to push forward and see something new.

After all, there is plenty to see. The planet Zebes is one of the most richly atmospheric gaming destinations, a world full of detailed backdrops set off by a restrained but effective soundtrack. It's the kind of world that compels you to visit again and again, and it made Super Metroid one of the finest games of all time.



RISE from the ASHES

RPG fans have waited nearly a decade for the return of the Lufia series. Will **Lufia: Curse of the Sinistrals** for Nintendo DS be the sequel that they've been hoping for?

BY **CASEY LOE**

PUBLISHER: **NATSUME** DEVELOPER: **NEVERLAND** RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2010** **DS**

Once upon a time, Lufia seemed poised to become the next great RPG franchise. 1993's Lufia & The Fortress of Doom was a well-regarded Super NES game that struggled to stand out amidst a sea of RPGs in the 16-bit era, but its 1995 prequel, Lufia II: Rise of the Sinistrals, was a cult hit on both sides of the Pacific. The game broke new ground by featuring onfield enemies that players could strategically avoid when they chose, a dramatic storyline packed with memorable surprises, and a stronger focus on the puzzle-filled dungeons that set the series apart from its contemporaries. With an ever-growing cult of fanatical fans, the series was on the cusp of breaking big.

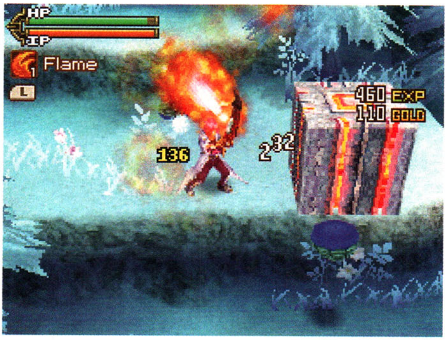
A few years later, Lufia was all but dead. The publisher of the game's long-awaited third chapter folded, and the company that ended up with the rights to the franchise quietly killed the long-delayed Lufia III in favor of a less ambitious sequel for the Game Boy Color. That was followed by a farmed-out Game Boy Advance spin-off that consumed what little momentum the series had left.

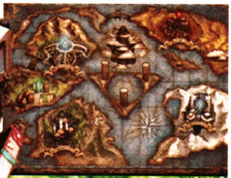
REINVENTING THE REMAKE

The developers at Neverland have kept busy working on the Rune Factory and Shining Force franchises, but they haven't forgotten the one that got away. When Square Enix approached Neverland about a revival of Lufia, the company jumped at the chance to return to the series it had shelved nearly a decade ago.

But instead of taking another shot at Lufia III, Neverland has dusted off Lufia II: Rise of the Sinistrals (which is chronologically the first game in the series) and transformed it into an action-RPG titled Lufia: Curse of the Sinistrals, which is coming to North America courtesy of Natsume. It's difficult to categorize the final product: it's too dramatic of a departure to be called a remake, but it borrows too much from its predecessor to be called a reimagining. Curse of the Sinistrals offers the same basic storyline and cast of heroes, but gives those heroes a different world, entirely different game mechanics, and a more focused quest that trims the game's length but sacrifices virtually none of its memorable moments. Curse of the Sinistrals is faithful to the spirit of the original game, yet feels like a completely different experience. The point, according to producer Hajime Kojima, was to preserve the aspects that excited fans of the original game while bringing in new players by modernizing the game mechanics and restarting the story from its chronological first chapter.

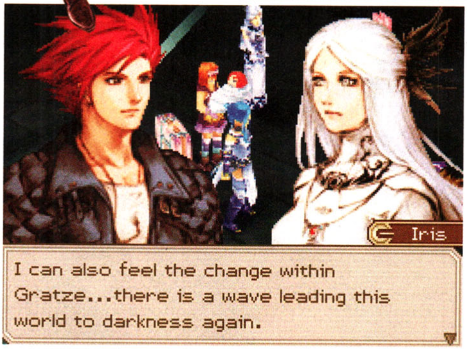
Visually, Curse of the Sinistrals shares little with its predecessor. The game world has been transformed from flat overhead tiles to colorful,





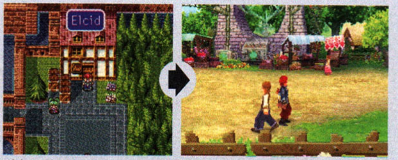
[Left] Instead of a contiguous overworld, areas are now linked by this simple map.

Eserikto, Sacred Forest

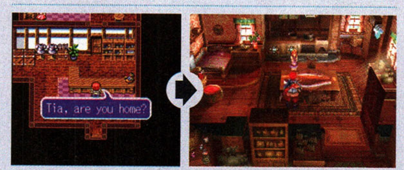


I can also feel the change within Gratze...there is a wave leading this world to darkness again.

LUFIA, THEN AND NOW



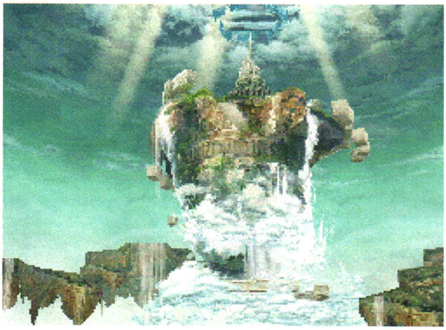
Although the game no longer begins in the town of Elcid, Maxim still calls Elcid home. Both versions of the town are verdant farming communities, but electric lights and automated wells reflect the major advances in technology available to the residents of the DS version.



Tia, are you home?

The heroine-is-a-lousy-cook subplot is beyond tired at this point, but Lufia gets a pass since it did it 15 years ago. The exact same dinner-date event occurs in both games, right down to the species of fish Tia serves.

fixed-angle 3D environments. The generic fantasy flavor of the original title has given way to a rich steampunk world in which scientists have harnessed a crystalline power source to generate citywide power grids, advanced war machines, and automated irrigation systems. But despite the different world, hero Maxim still has the same quest: assemble mankind's greatest warriors and lead them in battle against the mysterious Sinistrals, godlike beings who seem to appear throughout history solely to pound humanity back to the Stone Age. The storyline has been streamlined with the removal of several extraneous quests, and embellished with new events that better explain the characters and their motivations. For example, Curse of the Sinistrals fleshes out the romance between a pair of characters whose marriage seemed unrealistically abrupt in the original. And needless to say, Neverland can squeeze a lot more drama out of polygonal characters with voices and faces than they could from 16-bit sprites.

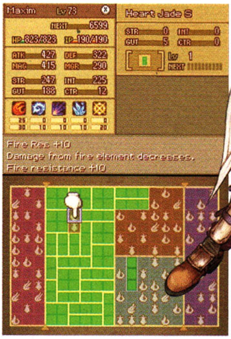


Maxim, our hope is in your hands.

SWORDS AND STEAMPUNKERY

An even bigger change is the replacement of the Dragon Quest-style turn-based battle system with real-time, combo-driven combat. Instead of fighting as a party, players can now switch between their six heroes by tapping a character's face on the bottom screen of the Nintendo DS system. Players are free to focus on a few favorites, but there's plenty of fun to be had with the full roster, as the generic swords and staves characters formerly wielded have been replaced with exotic high-tech weapons that make each character feel unique. Who wants to swing a boring old whip when you can open a suitcase to unleash a series of spring-loaded fists, traps, and blades? In Curse of the Sinistrals, even the elves have abandoned their traditional bows in favor of high-tech firearms. Neverland has had a great deal of practice making action-RPGs in the last decade, and that experience is on full display in the game's fluid and fast-paced combat. Basic combos deliver a satisfying beating, while the traditional Lufia IP gauge returns to allow a variety of powerful special attacks. A new and oddly entertaining system allows players to pound on

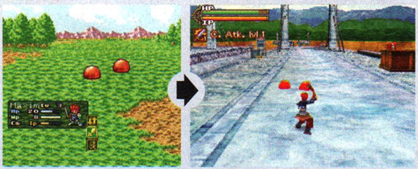
Looks like you were finally able to get all of the wave cores.



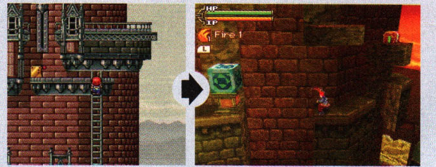
Fire Res +10
Damage from fire element decreases.
Fire resistance +10

[Left] A new magic-stone grid system provides some nice customization.

LUFIA, THEN AND NOW

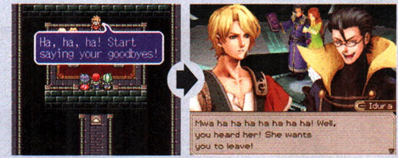


Whether you're using menu-based combat or real-time action, a hero's battlefield training always begins with a pair of red Slimes.



Curse of the Sinistrals shakes up the original game's world map, cutting most of the old areas and introducing several new ones. But every now and then Maxim's DS journey perfectly parallels his adventures on the Super NES.

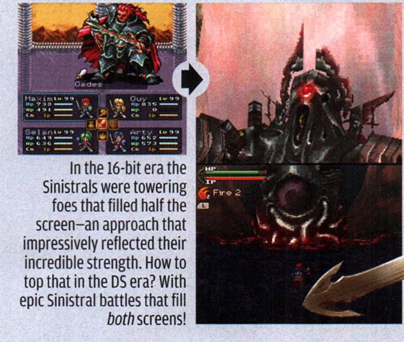
LUFIA, THEN AND NOW



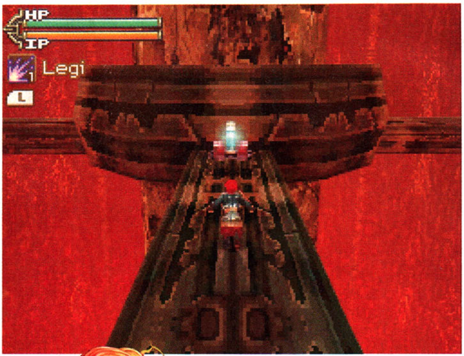
Ha, ha, ha! Start saying your goodbyes!

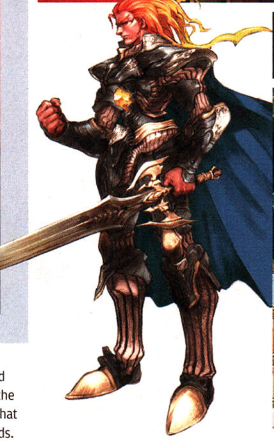
Mwa ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha! Well, you heard her! She wants you to leave!

Advances in video game-script writing have allowed the creepy, cliché-spouting Idura to evolve from a mere "ha, ha, ha" level of villainy to a full-on "mwa ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha" level that was but a distant dream 15 years ago.

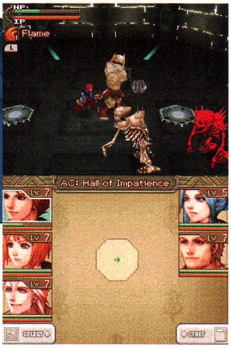


In the 16-bit era the Sinistrals were towering foes that filled half the screen—an approach that impressively reflected their incredible strength. How to top that in the DS era? With epic Sinistral battles that fill *both* screens!



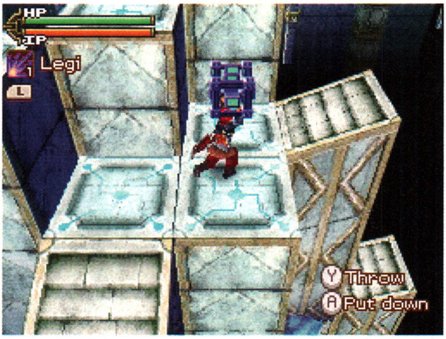


Curse of the Sinistrals opens with an all-new chapter that introduces the villainous Gades [left].



already fallen foes to generate more combat rewards.

In case you're not a fan of real-time combat, Neverland has provided an easy way to get through it: every time you die, you can choose to continue with a five-level boost to all of your characters, which will almost certainly provide the power to trounce whatever sent you to the Game Over screen. Needless to say, this could eliminate any trace of challenge the combat system has to offer, but that isn't quite as big a deal as it sounds. One thing Curse of the Sinistrals shares with its predecessor is that its combat system is more of a fun distraction than it is the primary focus of the game. In the original title, Maxim could find The Legend of Zelda-esque tools such as bombs and a bow and use them to solve the brain-teasing puzzles that filled nearly every room of dungeon and tower areas. That took the focus away from irrelevant random encounters and offered an endless stream of satisfying—and occasionally infuriating—challenges. That heritage continues in the puzzle-packed Curse of the Sinistrals, although the new game doesn't seem to share many puzzles in common with its forebearer. Instead of acquiring tools, each of your party members has special abilities (such as midair dashing, a hook shot, and a lock-on projectile attack) that you'll need to combine to clear each area's challenges. The active nature of the abilities adds an element of platforming action to the original game's switch and sliding-block puzzles, and makes it feel a little less like a rip-off of The Legend of Zelda.



THE CURSE OF EXPECTATIONS

Curse of the Sinistrals is likely to be a divisive title among Lufia fans. Neverland and Square Enix arrived at the decision to drastically re-create the series after concluding that Lufia II in its original form would not appeal to modern players. That's a conclusion with which Lufia's legions of fans would vehemently disagree, but that's no reason to shun Curse of the Sinistrals. Neverland hasn't set out to replace Lufia II, but to complement it with a new game that offers existing fans a unique world to explore and different puzzles to challenge, while getting newcomers up to speed on the series's storyline. It's a difficult balance to strike, but if Neverland can pull it off, the Lufia series may get a second chance at the bright future that slipped away so long ago.

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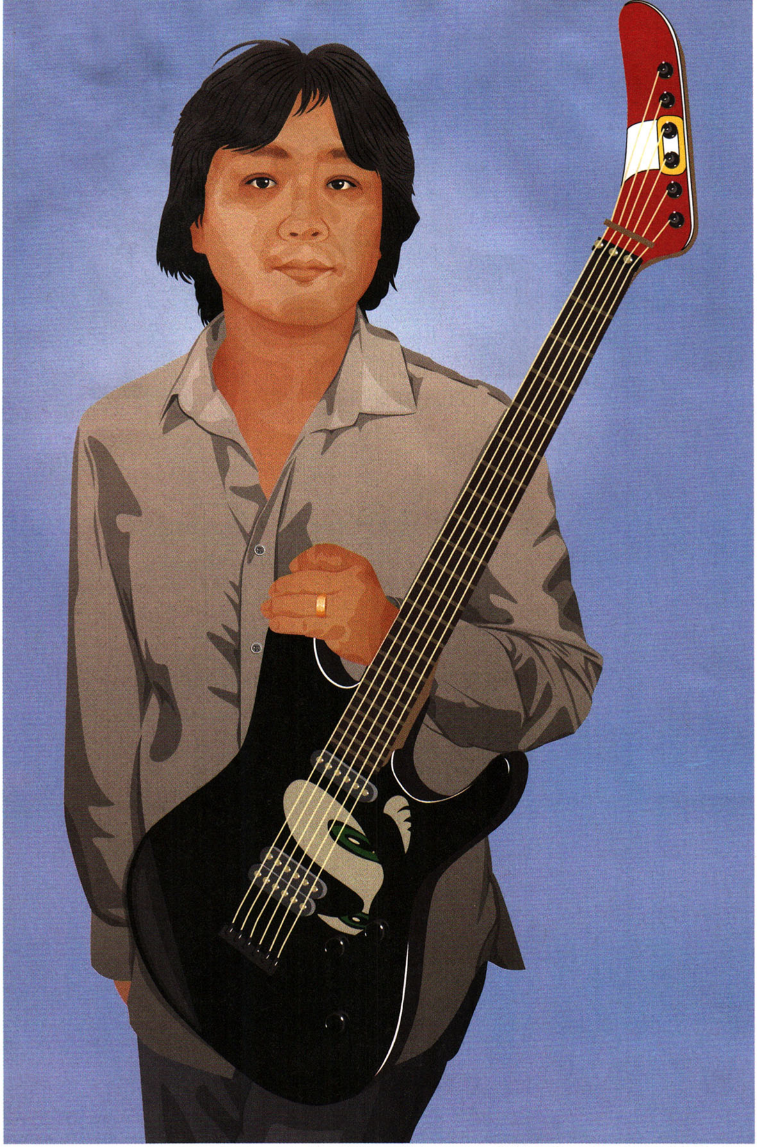
Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
August 2, 1970

BIRTHPLACE
Matsushima, Japan

POSITION
Sound director, Sega

BEST KNOWN FOR
Composing the music for modern Sonic the Hedgehog games; implanting the Knuckles rap in our heads for all eternity

FAVORITE FOOD
Mexican and Italian

CURRENT PROJECTS
Sonic the Hedgehog 4, Sonic Colors

Jun Senoue

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

For more than 15 years, Jun Senoue has lent his distinctive musical stylings to one of the most successful franchises in video game history: Sonic the Hedgehog. Senoue first got acquainted with the Blue Blur when he was working as one of many contributors to Sonic the Hedgehog 3's soundtrack, but he truly made his mark as the lead composer for 1999's Sonic Adventure. That game established a bold new sound for the series, infusing it with contemporary pop-rock influences, upbeat vocal arrangements, and lots of electric guitar (Senoue's favorite instrument). Though he's continued along that track ever since, the veteran composer will return to his chiptune roots later this year with the retro-style Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode 1. He's also serving as sound director for the Wii version of Sonic Colors.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you originally get into the video game business?

JUN SENOUE
When I was a teenager, I was a big fan of video games and PC games. I was really into playing in a band, too. I wanted to be a musician and be part of a successful band. But when I was 22 years old, the band I played in disbanded. At that point, one of my friends suggested that I apply for a composer position at video game companies. I thought, "Oh, that sounds like a good idea!" So I sent my demo to Sega and...the rest is history. [Laughs] That was about 17 years ago. Both things are my favorites—music and video games. So what better way to spread my music?

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
I wanted to be a train conductor. In Japan, there's lots of public transportation, of course, and I was totally engrossed in those trains when I was a kid.

Where did your interest in music come from?
I started learning piano when I was just three years old. It wasn't my idea. [Laughs] My parents wanted me to play musical instruments. When I was 12, we moved to Panama. It would have been tough to move a huge piano all the way to Central America, so I started getting into synthesizers. But at that time, there was a music channel on TV, and I saw that the keyboard player was always at the back of the stage. He was never in the front row. So I switched to the bass because I wanted to perform up front. Then after that, I discovered that guitar players got to play more passionately and had their own solos. So when I was about 15 years old, I switched to the guitar. [Laughs]

Who are some of your favorite musical artists, and what do you consider your musical influences?
Oh, I listen to lots of stuff. Lots of Japanese bands and singers, as well as lots of American stuff from the '80s and today. It's pretty hard to pick just one or even several artists. As for my influences, I try to listen to lots of different kinds of music. I think it helps me create a variety of sounds.

We read somewhere that you have a degree in economics, which isn't what one might expect from a musician. Why did you choose that particular field of study?
One simple reason: I could be absent a lot and still pass. [Laughs] I was in a band at university, and I had to take off quite a bit of time to go on tour. I would be gone two or three weeks at a time. So I just chose an easy subject.

You started at Sega during the 16-bit era. What was it like working on a video game soundtrack at that time, given the limitations of the hardware?
Before joining Sega, I didn't have any experience working with a sequencer. I didn't know how to program the sound. Also, I didn't know how to compose a song with such a limited number of sounds. So it was very challenging. I sort of had to learn on the job.

The first Sonic game you worked on was Sonic the Hedgehog 3. Was it difficult coming into a series that already had something of an established musical style? Did you try to maintain the same feel or was that not something you worried about?
I was a big fan of the first two Sonic games. It was an honor to be one of the composers for Sonic 3. All of us wanted to keep a similar sound to the first two games since it was so good. It was very catchy and easy to remember. So we definitely tried to preserve that.

One of Michael Jackson's collaborators recently confirmed that Jackson was involved with the music for Sonic the Hedgehog 3 in some capacity. Did you work with Jackson at all or can you speak to how that came about?
I don't know much about MJ's involvement. [Pauses] Actually, I know quite a lot, but I can't tell. [Laughs]

One interesting thing about Sonic soundtracks is that the music is usually totally new for each installment. In other words, there aren't many recurring themes that appear in multiple games. Has that been purposeful on your part, and if so, why do you prefer that approach?
As you remember, the first two Sonic games did have the same theme song. After that, I'm not really sure why, but we decided to make a new theme song for each title. In my opinion, it would probably be good if we could have just one Sonic theme song that everybody knows. Hmm...I hope we will compose something

> *"Both things are my favorites—music and video games. So what better way to spread my music?"*

GAMEOGRAPHY

Though it didn't come out in the US until after Dark Wizard and Sonic the Hedgehog 3, Formula One World Championship was actually the first game Senoue worked on. In subsequent years, he's spent most of his time composing for Sega's fleet-footed mascot.

DARK WIZARD
1993, SEGA CD
COMPOSER

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 3
1994, SEGA GENESIS
COMPOSER

FORMULA ONE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP: BEYOND THE LIMIT
1994, SEGA CD
COMPOSER

SONIC ADVENTURE
1999, DREAMCAST
SOUND DIRECTOR

SONIC ADVENTURE 2
2001, DREAMCAST
SOUND DIRECTOR

Power Profiles

like that for the next one. Maybe. [Laughs]

Most Sonic titles since the Sega CD days have included vocal themes, which is a bit unusual for a video game series. What about that appeals to you?
I just love collaborating with other musicians. Every composer has his own style. Some are very good at composing classical tracks, for instance. I can do an imitation of classical-style music, but nothing really authentic. That's something that other composers can do much better. I like to team up with musicians who are better than me at certain kinds of music.

How did it feel to have several of your tunes featured in Super Smash Bros. Brawl?
Incredible. It was one of the greatest chances we've had to promote Sonic himself, and it was the same for the music. Lots of people discovered our music through that game. It was huge.

Many of the musicians who worked on Smash Bros. Brawl get together for a biannual party in Tokyo. It's a lot of fun, and hanging out with that group of composers is pretty amazing.

Why did you choose the Angel Island theme as the tune to get a new arrangement for Brawl? Would you have liked to include other remixed songs?
Most of the other composers created spunky new arrangements for classic Nintendo songs, but I wanted to provide a fresh arrangement for classic Sonic music. At first I was going to remix a track from one of the first two Sonic games, but for some reason, I just couldn't decide which song to choose. It was too tough. So I decided to go with something from either Sonic 3 or Sonic & Knuckles. I eventually chose Angel Island, which is the first zone in Sonic 3. If you think about it, the music from the first level of a game is usually the most familiar. Often times, players will give up before they get to level five or level six. But everybody who played Sonic 3 will know the Angel Island tune. That's the main reason I chose it. Originally, Takashi [Iizuka, Sonic Team producer] wanted me to pick the song from the Death Egg [in Launch Base Zone].

What kinds of projects are you involved with outside of gaming?
I'm in a band called Crush 40. It started as part of a Sonic project; we provided the songs called "Open Your Heart" and "Live and Learn" for the Sonic Adventure games. In 2003 we released a CD for the European market, then last year we did a compilation CD called *The Best of Crush 40*. Lately we've been talking to Wave Master, which is Sega's internal record label in Japan, about promoting our stuff more in the States. So we have a plan to put our songs on iTunes and the Rock Band Network and other places like that.

Which soundtrack that you've worked on is your favorite and why?
Both Sonic Adventure and Sonic Adventure 2. With those games, we changed the franchise's music style so drastically that a lot of fans said, "Wow!" I know some love it and some hate it, but that's okay because it's music! It's pretty hard to compose music that everyone's into. So I just made something that I could be proud of.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem when composing a soundtrack, what's your process for working through it?
Good question! [Laughs] When I don't have any ideas for a song, I don't compose. I just play with toys or watch a movie or something. Then when I do get an idea for a piece of music, I totally focus on it until I'm finished.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
Hmm...there are so many. I would have to say my previous boss, Mr. [Yuji] Naka. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't be here. I was a huge fan of the original Sonic games, which he cocreated, and that's the main reason I sent my music demo to Sega rather than some other video game company. Also, he was the one who asked me to join Sonic Team USA. That's the reason I came to the States and contributed music to all of the studio's games, from Sonic Adventure 2 to NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams. Last year, he finally got married and I played my Sonic guitar at the wedding.

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
Even when I'm not working, I love to play musical instruments, of course. Also, when I lived in the States, I owned three cars. I was really into muscle cars. But that's a difficult hobby to continue in Japan. I totally miss that part of life in California!

If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
It's hard to pick just one!

When we asked Naka, he sort of cheated and said he'd be a wizard so he could have lots of powers.
[Laughs] Is that right? Hmm...how about this? If I don't have to sleep, that means I can spend 24 hours a day doing what I want. That would be great.

> *"It's pretty hard to compose music that everyone's into. So I just made something that I could be proud of."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

SONIC HEROES
2004, GAMECUBE
SOUND DIRECTOR

NiGHTS: JOURNEY OF DREAMS
2007, Wii
COMPOSER

MARIO
SONIC

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
2008, Wii
MUSIC ARRANGEMENT

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4: EPISODE 1
2010, WiiWare
SOUND DIRECTOR

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MOST NINTENDO
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YOUR DOOR!

NEW ZELDA! Drive a train and command enemies in The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks for Nintendo DS!
ALL ABOARD!
NINTENDO POWER
RED STEEL 2
FINALLY, wielding a sword in a Wii game feels as real as you'd always dreamed!
MARIO & SONIC TOGETHER AGAIN! The dynamic duo re-team for the Olympic Winter Games on Wii and DS
PUNCH-OUT!! BLOWOUT
Wii
Punch-Out!!
RESIDENT EVIL RETURNS TO Wii
BOOM BLOX: BASH PARTY
FIRE EMBLEM: SHADOW DRAGON
MARIO & LUIGI RPG 3
SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SURVIVOR
SONIC AND THE BLACK KNIGHT
Future
DEFENDING THE TITLE
AGENTS of CHANGE
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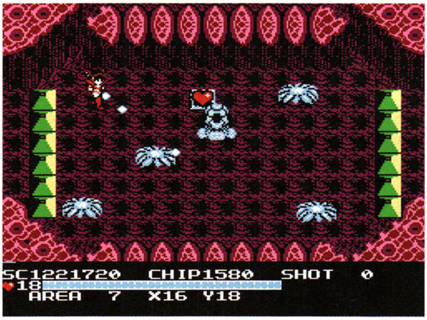
I'm more than meets the eye!

The Guardian Legend

So...who wants to blow up a planet today?

Includes Password Feature
Broderbund
THE GUARDIAN LEGEND™
Nintendo
Official Nintendo Seal of Quality
Action Series

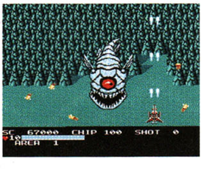
PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **BRODERBUND**
DEVELOPER: **COMPILE**
RELEASE DATE: **APRIL 1989**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **4, 8, 9, 10, 13, 2**
NUMBER OF CHARACTERS IN THE OVERLY LONG PASSWORDS: **32**



The Guardian must be thinking to herself, "Just shoot the disgusting blobs. Try to ignore the one making kissy faces at you."

Compile is a name that will be familiar to only the most hardcore gamers out there. In addition to the puzzle game Puyo Puyo, this relatively obscure developer created some of the best shooters of the 8- and 16-bit eras; you can check out a sampling of Compile's work (including Zanac for the NES, M.U.S.H.A. for the Sega Genesis, and Blazing Lazers for the TurboGrafx16) on Virtual Console. The Guardian Legend is another fine Compile creation, but it goes beyond a mere shooter. This genre-bending title mixes laser-blasting spaceships with Zelda-esque adventuring.

When the game begins, it's much like most other vertical-scrolling shooters. You weave between enemy ships and a barrage of incoming fire while attempting to take down as many of the bad guys as you can. Of course, there are power-ups to collect and a boss to fight as the end of the stage. After defeating the boss, however, you find yourself controlling an armor-clad woman inside a futuristic dungeon.

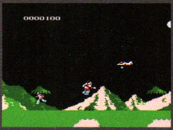


The woman is known simply as the Guardian, and she wasn't piloting the ship from the previous level—she *was* the ship. That's right, our hero can transform. She's been sent to the surface of Naju, a large planet bursting with hostile life forms, which has been launched on a collision course with Earth by some evil aliens. Her job is to infiltrate the planet and activate its self-destruct sequence. The Guardian must first make her way through Naju's labyrinthine surface and discover passageways inside the planet. Once she's in, she transforms into her ship for a bit of shooting action.

Like most lengthy adventure games, The Guardian Legend features a variety of weapons to assist in taking down your foes. As the Guardian explores the surface, she can collect all sorts of new items, such as lasers, grenades, spread shots, bullet shields, and more. You can also find parts to increase the Guardian's shields.

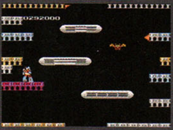
Although the blending of a Zelda-style game and a space-shooter doesn't seem like the most natural mix, it works surprisingly well. The Guardian Legend is a unique game that fans of either genre will enjoy. **—PHIL T.**

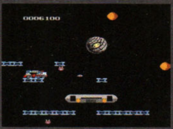
BETTER THAN THE REAL THING



Some might claim that the shape-shifting Guardian is nothing more than a cheap Transformers rip-off. When it comes to NES games, however, we'll take this "fake" Transformer over the real deal any day. Takara released Transformers: Mystery of Convoy in Japan back in 1986. The player controls Ultra Magnus on a quest to discover Optimus Prime's killer. (Convoy is Prime's Japanese name.)

The game is a very basic side-scroller with bland levels and dull enemies, but it's notorious for its insanely high difficulty. Magnus is a delicate Autobot, and one hit is enough to destroy him. Even skilled players have trouble getting past the first stage.





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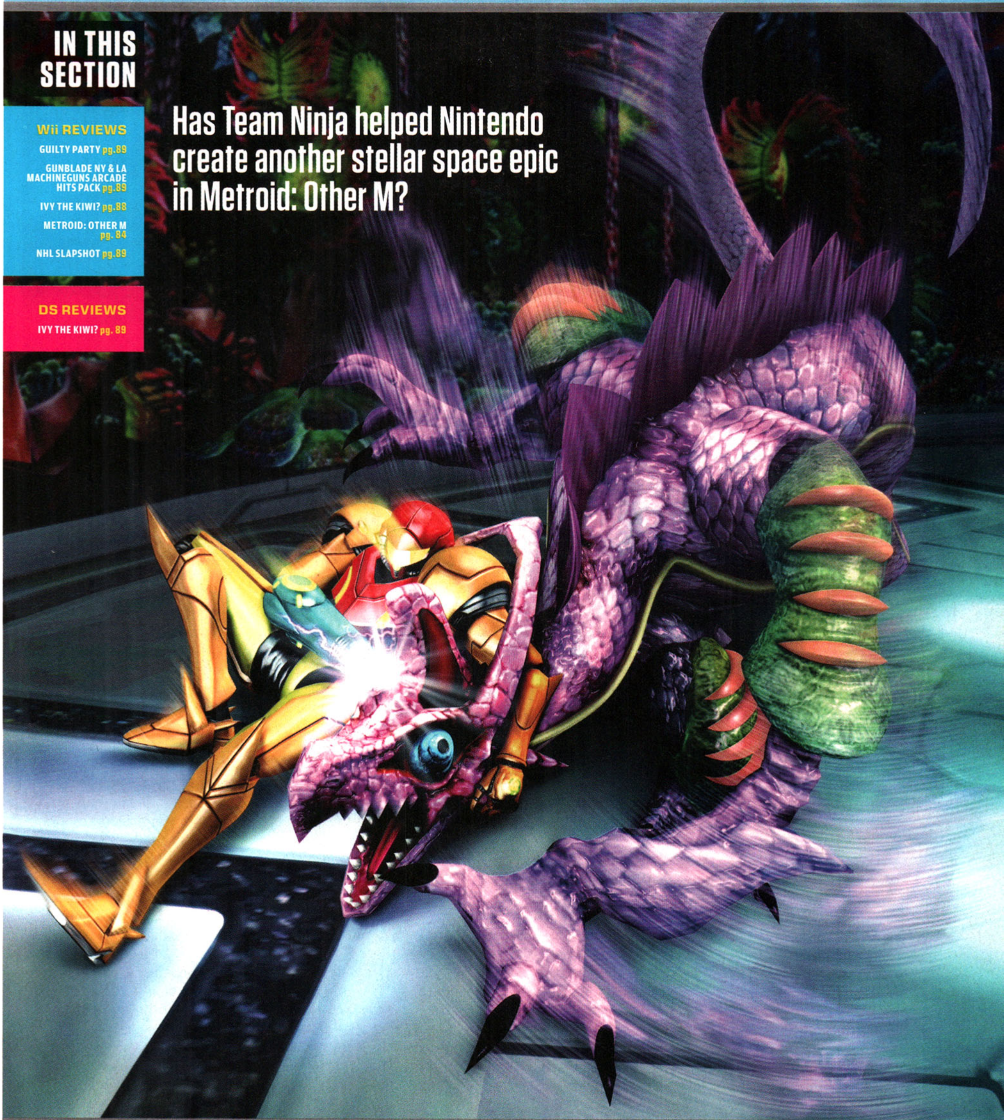
REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES



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DS REVIEWS

IVY THE KIWI? pg. 89

Has Team Ninja helped Nintendo create another stellar space epic in Metroid: Other M?

Evolution of the Species

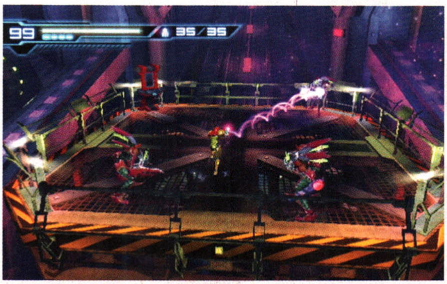
METROID: OTHER M

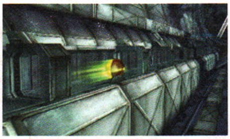
RATING: 8.5

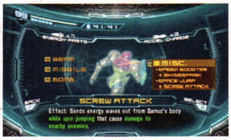
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **NINTENDO/TEAM NINJA**
ESRB: **TEEN**

It's becoming a pattern for the Metroid series: bring in a new development studio, reload the franchise with new ideas, and freak out the fans in the process. Retro Studios pulled off the first big change with 2002's Metroid Prime, which successfully turned the side-scrolling series into a first-person shooter and spawned two sequels. Now Nintendo is once again switching things up with Metroid: Other M, a seemingly radical side-view/first-person mix infused with the signature style of the action-game gurus at Team Ninja. And once again, the fans can rest easy. For all of the game's flashy new features, it still feels very much like a Metroid adventure—and a great one, at that.

One new gameplay aspect that has intrigued, excited, and worried fans is the control scheme, which somewhat controversially uses only the Wii Remote controller. The remote is primarily held sideways, NES-style, and is used to play Other M much like the pre-Prime Metroid games of yesteryear. This old-school method works well, and—paired with modern polygonal graphics—provides a New Super Mario Bros. kind of take on Metroid. When Samus isn't simply running left and right—that is, when she enters an area in which she can move around in a three-dimensional space—using the Control Pad seems, at first, to be a clunky compromise. Any other game would use the Control Stick for this kind of movement, and the missing smoothness of analog control is noticeable. But after the first slightly awkward half-hour, the controls didn't bother me at all. That's because the game has been cleverly designed to minimize the need to press the Control Pad in awkward diagonal directions. For example, when running along a curving corridor, your natural instinct may be to change the angle of your thumb to match the winding path. That works as you'd expect, but alternatively you can continue to hold

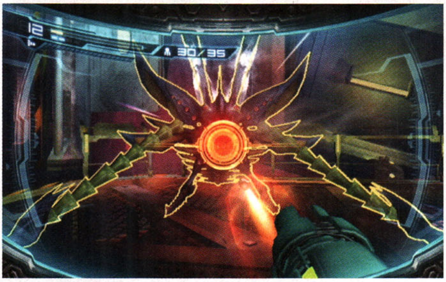






Effect: Sends energy waves out from Samus's body while spin-jumping that cause damage to nearby enemies.

[Above and below] You can switch between third- and first-person views on the fly; both styles are fun to play and they work well together.



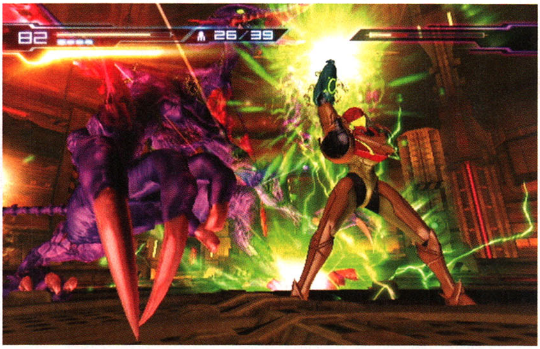
the initial direction and Samus will automatically stay on course as if she were on rails, matching the bend of the corridor without you having to manually point her that way. Similarly, the game assists enemy targeting quite a bit. As long as you have Samus pointed in the general direction of an enemy, her shots will find their mark. These control assists are subtle, but really make the gameplay smooth, fast, and satisfying. Having said that, it's unfortunate that the game doesn't allow players who might still prefer the familiar feel of analog control to attach a Nunchuk controller. The Control Stick has become the standard method by which most modern third-person action games are played, and some players may not want to switch back.

At any time you can point the Wii Remote at the screen to enter first-person mode. Doing so roots Samus to the spot, but allows you to aim in any direction to fire beam weapons or missiles; this is the only way to fire missiles, in fact. Changing views in the heat of battle can get you slaughtered if an enemy is too close, but the action goes into slow motion for about a second after the switch, which helps you regain your bearings and find your target. The transition between the two play modes is impressively seamless, and adds a certain kind of magic—it's just neat to do. The first-person view is also used for examining the environment, and the game makes especially clever use of this by tucking power-ups, switches, and the entrances to hidden passages out of your normal line of sight. You'll get stumped from time to time if you don't keep your eyes peeled, but the answers are always there for you to discover if you're thorough enough.

Another welcome addition is the ability to dodge an incom-

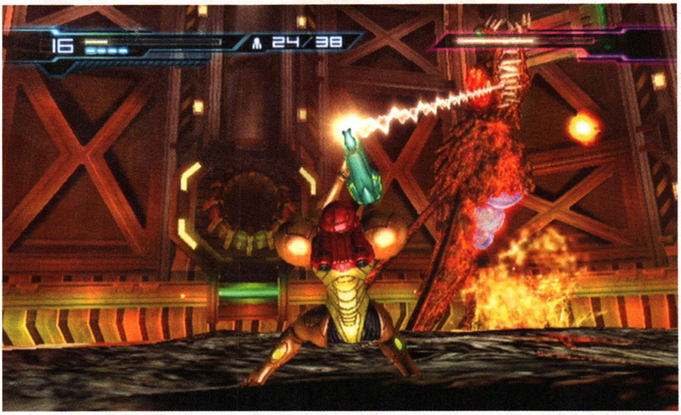
Ninja Magic

Team Ninja's influence can be felt in the game's many showy, over-the-top beam blasts and explosions—firing a charged Wave Beam fills the screen with so many special effects that everything else is momentarily obscured—and Samus's many creature-specific finishing blows that have her wrestling enemies into submission while striking badass poses. The excesses don't feel out of place though, and they complement the series-standard elements nicely.

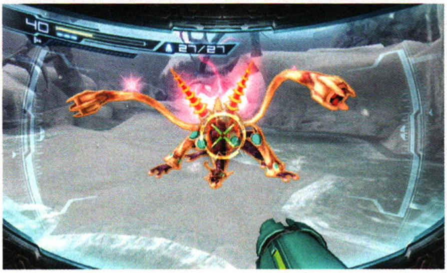


Plot Primer

Metroid: Other M is set immediately after the events of Super Metroid, in which a baby Metroid sacrificed itself to protect Samus from Mother Brain. Samus picks up a distress call that leads her to a vessel called *Bottle Ship*, and once aboard she runs into some old soldier friends from her days with the Galactic Federation. Despite unresolved issues with the group's commander, Adam Malkovich, Samus joins the squad as they search the ship for survivors and clues about what went wrong.

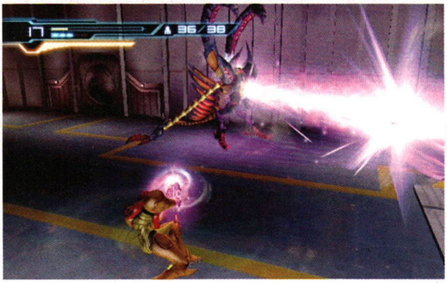


[Below] The story often flashes back to Samus's rebellious past as a Galactic Federation soldier.



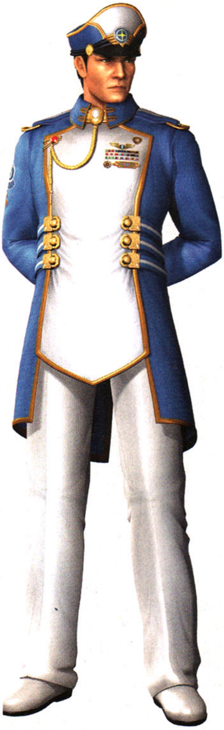
ing attack by pressing any direction on the Control Pad a split second before Samus would get hit. Precision timing isn't required since you can repeatedly tap the pad until you happen across the right moment, but cheating this way doesn't lessen the appeal of Samus's supercool green-flame-propelled dives. All of her moves look cool, actually, and feel sharp and satisfying, from standard spinning flips to advanced maneuvers such as the Screw Attack. Her many actions flow together nicely, creating an addictive tempo as you rush from room to room while leaping, blasting, and dodging alien beasts.

Metroid: Other M has garnered attention not just for its new developer and control scheme, but also for its tradition-breaking emphasis on storytelling. There are a lot of cinema scenes—so many that you are eventually given the option to watch them assembled into a full movie. While I found the game's mysteries and evolving character relationships compelling enough to hold my interest, the story definitely has its ups and downs. Samus's meandering, monotone inner monologues are one of the



major down points; she delivers awkward dialogue with lifeless voice acting. There's a lot of this in the first hour or so, but thankfully things pick up when the game's central plot points present themselves. The story doesn't always offer satisfying resolutions (no clear answer is ever given to a key mystery), but it benefits the game simply because its sweet-looking cinematics provide an ongoing sense of progression. And there are a few moments—such as an incredibly tense build-up to the inevitable Samus/Ridley showdown—that manage to achieve an emotional impact. Additionally, I appreciate that I can, at any time, refresh my memory of past events by checking a story summary on the pause menu or by reading the most recent happenings on the save-data-loading screen.

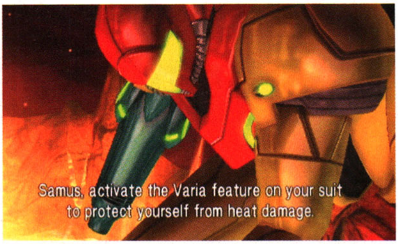
Although Metroid: Other M has a few rough spots, it gets the really important stuff right. It feels like a natural evolution of the old side-scrollers; the direction one would have expected the series to go before it took a turn as an FPS. The game keeps getting better as Samus gains more abilities (all of her most classic power-ups are present) and the rooms become correspondingly trickier. This is also one of the best-sounding games in quite some time, with snazzy sound effects, atmospheric music, and rousing renditions of classic themes that do the series proud. Fans will likely find bits to bicker about, but overall Other M delivers the goods. Here's hoping Nintendo and Team Ninja give us a couple more experiences like this one before the next big series reinvention. **—CHRIS S.**



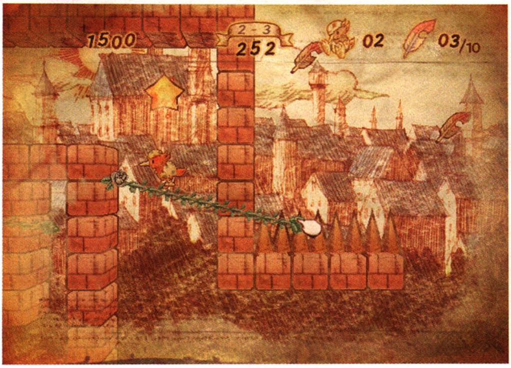
[Left] Samus struggles with a rocky father/daughter-type relationship with her former CO.

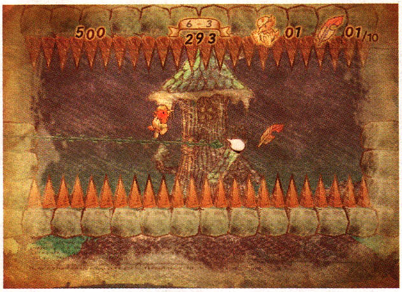
Not Authorized

It's nice that this isn't yet another Metroid in which Samus's lack of starting abilities is explained by conveniently damaged armor, but the new reasoning is even sillier: she begins the game with all of her powers but won't use them until the commander of the squad she's teamed up with gives her the go-ahead. Restricting the use of human-endangering Power Bombs is understandable, but Samus won't even activate her Varia Suit—which simply lessens the damage she takes—without proper authorization. This irrational setup doesn't hamper gameplay, of course, but it's sure to spur a lot of eye-rolling.



Samus, activate the Varia feature on your suit to protect yourself from heat damage.





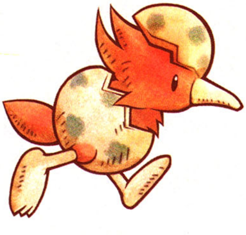
In motion, the game has a cool moving-sketch quality similiar to Sega's Valkyria Chronicles (PlayStation 3) or a-ha's classic "Take on Me" music video.

Fine Feathered Friend

IVY THE KIWI?

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **PROPE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**



The latest offering from veteran game designer Yuji Naka, Ivy the Kiwi? is a bit of a throwback. Reminiscent of many a 16-bit classic, its charming exterior belies a pretty hardcore character-action game.

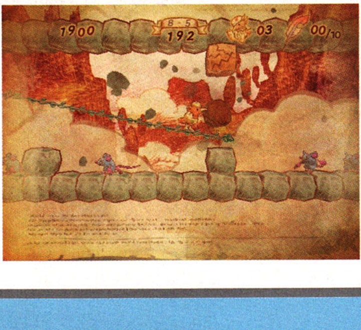
The simple premise revolves around a flightless baby bird in search of her mother. As Ivy sets out on her quest, the diminutive hatchling marches forward on her own, and it's your job to manipulate her course by drawing vines, guiding her safely to the goal at the end of each stage. That task starts out simple enough, but the game gradually introduces new elements—evil rats, deadly water droplets, and the like—to make the journey more treacherous. Before long, the level designs get downright diabolical, and it feels like your ward is constantly on the razor's edge. Things become even more arduous if you try to collect all 10 feathers scattered throughout each stage (an optional task that rewards you with an extra life and, more importantly for dedicated platforming fans, a source of pride). With a bit of practice, though, you'll soon find yourself getting into a rhythm and pulling off some astonishing maneuvers. And as Naka so adeptly put it when we chatted with him about Ivy a few months ago, "One of the great things about action games is that moment when you think, 'Wow, I'm really getting good at this!'" To facilitate that, the controls work like a charm, and as challenging as it gets, the game never feels unfair. Plus a real sense of physics and momentum drives everything, not unlike Naka's best-known creation, Sonic the Hedgehog.

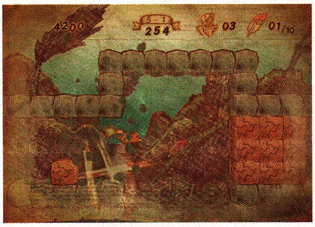
The main story consists of 50 levels, and once you complete those, you'll unlock remixed versions of all 50 that introduce additional obstacles and require you to find a key before you reach the goal. There's also a split-screen race mode for up to four players in which you can wreak havoc on your competitors by drawing vines in their window. It's good, chaotic fun, even if you do feel like a jerk for trying to lead an adorable baby bird to its doom.

Ivy's production values are fairly modest, but there's a warmth to the hand-drawn visuals that I find eminently appealing, and the gentle soundtrack is infectious. All in all, it's not a bad value for the $30 price tag. It bears noting, however, that a WiiWare version of the game is coming soon and will offer all 50 of the main story levels for what's likely to be a considerably lower price. (No WiiWare game so far has cost more than $15.) I'm not sure the remixed levels and multiplayer mode warrant the extra money.

Still, Ivy is worth checking out one way or the other for those who can still appreciate quality gameplay without a lot of bells and whistles. It's not quite on the same level as Naka's best work—and I'd really like to see him tackle something more ambitious again in the near future—but this is a worthy addition to his oeuvre.

—STEVE T.





[Above] You can use vines like a slingshot to launch Ivy.

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT IS YOUR ALL-TIME FAVORITE DISNEY VIDEO GAME?

JUSTIN CHENG

DuckTales for the NES. It has one of the most memorable songs in gaming: the track from the Moon level.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse for the Sega Genesis. That stormy sunrise on the third stage is still one of the prettiest things I've seen in a game.

RANDY NELSON

The Magical Quest Starring Mickey Mouse on Super NES has always been a favorite of mine. It's fun, the music's catchy, and the game was produced by the creator of the mighty Ghosts 'n Goblins.

CHRIS SLATE

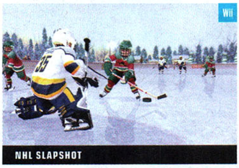
Since Justin picked DuckTales, I'll go with Chip 'N Dale Rescue Rangers. Man, those Disney NES games by Capcom were good! We need those brought back, Mega Man 9-style!

STEVE THOMASON

I'm going to cheat a little bit and go with the Kingdom Hearts series. I'll grant that the storytelling can get a bit...convoluted...at times, but I still find the saga awfully compelling.

WELCOME FANS
Wii

NHL SLAPSHOT



NHL SLAPSHOT

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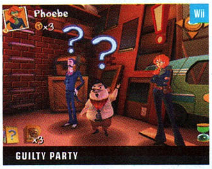
IVY THE KIWI?



GUILTY PARTY

Wii
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GUNBLADE NY & LA MACHINEGUNS

NHL SLAPSHOT

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **ELECTRONIC ARTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

EA Sports has taken a somewhat novel approach to its first-ever hockey title for the Wii console—NHL Slapshot comes packaged with a plastic hockey-stick peripheral that encases the Wii Remote and Nunchuk controllers. The idea, of course, is to let you mimic many of the same motions you'd use on the ice. In that regard, Slapshot largely succeeds, and there certainly is a visceral satisfaction that comes from thrusting the stick to body-check an opponent. The game itself, however, lacks a strong identity. It's not flashy enough to occupy arcade territory, and it doesn't have the depth and authenticity of a full-blown sim. The bare-bones season mode pales in comparison to the competition and feels tacked on. Instead, the main attraction is ostensibly Peewee to Pros, a mode in which you lead your onscreen persona from adolescence to NHL superstardom. There are some cool RPG elements involved as you gain experience and assign skill upgrades, but at the end of the day, I'm not sure how many gamers want to spend substantial time playing hockey as a 12-year-old kid.

If you can pony up for the extra sticks (the game comes with just one), NHL Slapshot is best enjoyed by a group of friends who don't take their hockey too seriously. Hardcore fans of the sport will be better served by NHL 2K11. **—STEVE T.**

IVY THE KIWI?

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **PROPE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

The newest release from Sonic the Hedgehog cocreator Yuji Naka, Ivy the Kiwi? has players using the stylus to create strings of ivy for its star to run along as she moves forward on her own through 100 stages. There can be only so much ivy onscreen at once, so good planning and quick reflexes are required in order to avoid pitfalls and overcome obstacles. Additionally, the ivy is elastic, so you can use the stylus to fling Ivy when needed. These mechanics are novel and feel great, but take some practice. The difficulty ramps up at a good pace, creating a nice balance of challenge and replayability that'll keep this game card in your Nintendo DS system for quite some time. **—RANDY N.**

GUILTY PARTY

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE**
DEVELOPER: **WIDELOAD GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

At first glance, Guilty Party seems like yet another minigamefest that's meant to appeal to a casual audience. But don't dismiss this title—Guilty Party is fun. And I mean that both in terms of its gameplay and its overall sense of humor. Up to four players take turns searching for clues and interrogating suspects via motion-controlled minigames, gathering evidence as to the identity of each level's culprit. (Your ultimate goal is to catch and unmask the villainous Mr. Valentine.) The minigames themselves are simple yet entertaining (though repetitive), but the real appeal of this title is the aforementioned humor that comes across in the cut-scenes. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that Guilty Party had some genuinely funny moments. **—JUSTIN C.**

GUNBLADE NY & LA MACHINEGUNS ARCADE HITS PACK

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **SEGA**
ESRB: **TEEN**

Both Gunblade NY and LA Machineguns were entertaining on-rails shooters way back when (1995 and 1997, respectively) in the arcades, but they don't hold up quite as well today on a home console. The simplistic polygonal models look archaic by modern standards, and having endless continues means you can rip through both of these games in under an hour (though there are some unlockable power-ups you can use on subsequent playthroughs). Despite these issues, however, I can't help but like this two-pack. Maybe it's the nostalgia talking, but I had fun—short-lived though it may be—blasting baddies with a co-op buddy. It's not $30 worth of fun, but I appreciate that Sega is rereleasing some of its arcade back catalog. Now where's Virtua Cop? **—JUSTIN C.**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa	6.5	Electronic Arts	254	E
Academy of Champions: Soccer	6.5	Ubisoft	248	E
All Star Karate	7.0	THQ	255	E10+
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Astro Boy: The Video Game	7.5	D3Publisher	248	E10+
Attack of the Movies 3D	4.0	Majesco	255	T
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	T
The Beatles: Rock Band	9.0	MTV Games	247	T
A Boy and His Blob	8.5	Majesco	247	E
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare: Reflex	9.0	Activision	249	M
Calling	5.0	Hudson	253	T
Cursed Mountain	7.0	Deep Silver	246	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party 3	6.5	Konami	248	E10+
Data East Arcade Classics	6.5	Majesco	252	T
Dead Space Extraction	8.0	Electronic Arts	247	M
Despicable Me: The Game	4.0	D3Publisher	258	E10+
DiRT 2	4.5	Codemasters	247	E10+
DJ Hero	8.5	Activision	249	T
Dragon Ball: Revenge of King Piccolo	6.5	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	7.0	THQ	248	E
Endless Ocean: Blue World	7.5	Nintendo	252	E10+
Family Fun Football	4.5	Tecmo	247	E
FIFA Soccer 10	6.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: The Crystal Bearers	8.0	Square Enix	250	T
Fragile Dreams: Farewell Ruins of the Moon	5.5	XSEED	253	T
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	246	T
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Guitar Hero 5	8.0	Activision	247	T
Harvest Moon: Animal Parade	7.5	Natsume	248	E
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Jambo! Safari	3.5	Sega	250	E
Ju-On: The Grudge	6.0	XSEED	247	M
Karaoke Revolution	6.0	Konami	248	T
The Last Airbender	6.0	THQ	257	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	7.5	Warner Bros.	257	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	6.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
LEGO Rock Band	8.0	Warner Bros.	249	E10+
Madden NFL 10	8.0	Electronic Arts	245	E
Madden NFL 11	8.5	Electronic Arts	258	E
Major League Baseball 2K10	7.0	2K Sports	253	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	7.0	Sega	247	E
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	5.5	Activision	248	T
Mini Ninjas	7.5	Eidos	247	E10+
Monster Hunter Tri	9.0	Capcom	254	T
Muramasa: The Demon Blade	8.0	Ignition	246	T
MySims Agents	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Naruto Shippuden: Clash of Ninja Revolution 3	7.5	Tomy	249	T
NBA 2K10	6.0	2K Sports	247	E
Need for Speed Nitro	7.0	Electronic Arts	249	E10+
New Super Mario Bros. Wii	9.0	Nintendo	249	E
NHL 2K10	8.0	2K Sports	246	E10+
No More Heroes 2: Desperate Struggle	9.0	Ubisoft	252	M
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Gottlieb Collection	6.5	Crave	251	E
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Pro Evolution Soccer 2010	8.0	Konami	250	E
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E10+
Racquet Sports	6.5	Ubisoft	253	E
Red Steel 2	8.0	Ubisoft	254	T
Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	249	M
Sakura Wars: So Long, My Love	7.5	NIS America	253	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Shaun White Snowboarding: World Stage	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Atlus	252	T
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	8.0	Konami	249	M
SimAnimals Africa	5.0	Electronic Arts	248	E
Sin and Punishment: Star Successor	9.0	Nintendo	257	T
The Sky Crawlers: Innocent Aces	7.0	XSEED	250	T
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	8.0	Sega	252	E
Spectrobes: Origins	5.5	Disney	246	E10+
Spore Hero	7.0	Electronic Arts	247	E10+
Spyborgs	7.5	Capcom	247	T
Star Wars The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	5.0	LucasArts	249	T
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Super Monkey Ball Step & Roll	5.5	Sega	252	E
Tatsunoko vs. Capcom: Ultimate All-Stars	9.0	Capcom	251	T
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Smash-Up	7.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tornado Outbreak	6.5	Konami	247	E10+
Tournament of Legends	7.0	Sega	257	T
Toy Story 3: The Video Game	7.5	Disney	257	E10+
Transformers: Cybertron Adventures	5.0	Activision	258	T
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	5.5	Activision	245	T
Trauma Team	8.0	Atlus	255	T
Valhalla Knights: Eldar Saga	4.0	XSEED	246	T
Wii Sports Resort	8.5	Nintendo	245	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.5	THQ	248	T

MORE ON:

THE CAGES: PRO STYLE BATTING PRACTICE

I'm no Albert Pujols, so I don't expect to walk into the batter's box and launch every pitch out of the park, but I feel like my lack of success in The Cages had as much to do with faulty game mechanics as it did holes in my swing. If you play with the Wii MotionPlus accessory, the game takes the trajectory of your swing into account, but it seems to have trouble reading it accurately. And without the accessory, you have to take your cuts much slower than you would in real life. —STEVE T.

2ND
OUT
OUT
OUT
OUT

MORE ON:

TRANSFORMERS: CYBERTRON ADVENTURES

After playing Transformers: War for Cybertron on Nintendo DS, I had high hopes for Cybertron Adventures. But instead of getting a better-looking version of the handheld game, I got a mediocre on-rails shooter in which you can't even transform at will. —JUSTIN C.

Missile Launcher
3375
x3

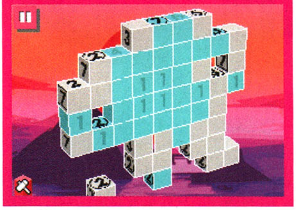
Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth	8.0	Capcom	252	T
Again	7.0	Tecmo Koei	253	T
Ant Nation	2.0	Konami	245	E
Assassin's Creed II: Discovery	7.0	Ubisoft	250	T
Atelier Annie: Alchemists of Sera Island	8.0	NIS America	248	E10+
Avatar: The Game	5.0	Ubisoft	250	E10+
Beat City	8.5	THQ	254	E
Bejeweled Twist	8.5	PopCap	251	E
Bleach: The 3rd Phantom	4.0	Sega	246	T
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	7.5	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Bookworm DS	8.5	PopCap	249	E
Cooking Mama 3: Shop & Chop	6.0	Majesco	248	E
C.O.P. The Recruit	4.0	Ubisoft	249	T
Crime Scene	5.0	SouthPeak	253	M
Dawn of Heroes	7.5	Majesco	253	E10+
Deca Sports DS	5.5	Hudson	253	E
Dementium II	8.0	SouthPeak	255	M
Despicable Me: The Game—Minion Mayhem	7.0	D3Publisher	258	E
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	8.0	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Ball Z: Attack of the Saiyans	8.0	Namco Bandai	248	E10+
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	9.0	Nintendo	257	E10+
Drawn to Life: The Next Chapter	8.0	THQ	248	E
Fighting Fantasy: The Warlock of Firetop Mountain	4.0	Aspyr	248	T
Fossil Fighters	8.0	Nintendo	246	E
G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra	5.0	Electronic Arts	245	E10+
Glory of Heracles	7.0	Nintendo	251	E10+
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	6.0	Natsume	258	E
Harvest Moon: Sunshine Islands	7.0	Natsume	248	E
Hero's Saga: Laevatein Tactics	7.0	Aksys	247	T
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey	4.0	505	246	E10+
Infinite Space	8.0	Sega	253	T
Iron Man 2	6.5	Sega	256	E10+
Kingdom Hearts 358/2 Days	9.0	Square Enix	247	E10+
The Last Airbender	7.5	THQ	257	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks	9.5	Nintendo	250	E10+
LEGO Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	5.0	LucasArts	249	E10+
Mario & Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story	9.5	Nintendo	246	E
Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games	8.0	Sega	247	E
Mega Man Zero Collection	9.0	Capcom	256	E
Might & Magic: Clash of Heroes	8.5	Ubisoft	247	E10+
Mini Ninjas	6.0	Eidos	247	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Ninja Destiny 2	7.0	Tomy	247	T
Nostalgia	7.0	Ignition	248	E10+
Phantasy Star Ø	8.0	Sega	248	E10+
Picross 3D	7.5	Nintendo	255	E
Pokémon HeartGold Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Sky	8.0	Nintendo	248	E
Pokémon SoulSilver Version	9.5	Nintendo	253	E
Professor Layton and the Diabolical Box	8.0	Nintendo	246	E10+
Puzzle Quest 2	7.5	D3Publisher	257	E10+
Rabbids Go Home	7.0	Ubisoft	249	E
Ragnarok DS	5.0	XSEED	252	E10+
River City Soccer Hooligans	7.0	Aksys	256	T
River City Super Sports Challenge	6.0	Aksys	258	T
Rooms: The Main Building	7.0	Hudson	253	E
Sands of Destruction	7.0	Sega	250	T
Scribblenauts	9.0	Warner Bros.	247	E10+
Shin Megami Tensei: Strange Journey	8.0	Atlus	253	M
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	6.0	Sega	252	E
Sonic Classic Collection	7.0	Sega	253	E
Space Bust-A-Move	7.0	Taito	245	E
Space Invaders Extreme 2	8.0	Square Enix	248	E
Spore Hero Arena	5.0	Electronic Arts	247	E
Squishy Tank	8.0	Natsume	253	E
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	5.5	LucasArts	249	E10+
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Arcade Attack	4.5	Ubisoft	248	E10+
Tetris Party Deluxe	8.5	Majesco	256	E
Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen	7.0	Activision	245	E10+
Transformers: War for Cybertron	7.0	Activision	258	E10+
WarioWare D.I.Y.	8.5	Nintendo	253	E
WireWay	6.5	Konami	249	E
A Witch's Tale	4.0	NIS America	247	E10+
The Wizard of Oz: Beyond the Yellow Brick Road	6.5	XSEED	246	E
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010	7.0	THQ	248	T

MORE ON:

PICROSS 3D

Picross 3D is a game that keeps on giving. It has some minor technical issues, but this title has me addicted thanks to its challenging gameplay and a constant stream of downloadable content. I even got my mom hooked on it! I also love the extra little touches, like the animations after you complete a puzzle. —**CHRIS H.**



MORE ON:

DRAGON QUEST IX: SENTINELS OF THE STARRY SKIES

I knew that Dragon Quest IX would deliver the charm and satisfying progression of an old-school Japanese RPG, but I was pleasantly surprised by its more modern touches. In addition to the welcome multiplayer feature, I applaud the exclusion of random battles and the seemingly unlimited character customization options. —CHRIS S.

A shield made by sticking sturdy scales together.

Scale shield
Rarity
Used by:
Defence
E 59
Iron broadsword
Scale shield
Leather hat
Chain mail
Leather gauntlets
Celestial stockings
Leather shoes
Gold ring
Dax
Lv. 12
Back
Change Character

Reader Michelle Morse did an excellent job with her Zelda costume. We can't wait to see her next project!

COSPLAY

Princess-Maker

A woman's quest to create Zelda costumes yields fantastic results.

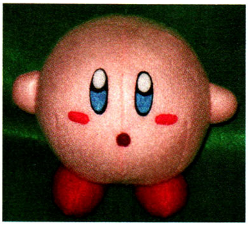
GROWING UP in Salt Lake City, Utah, Michelle Morse was captivated by the Legend of Zelda series, and specifically by the titular princess that guides Link's adventures. "Princess Zelda has always represented to me not just another damsel in distress, but the personification of all that is good, pure, true, and beautiful," says Morse. "As a child, I wished I could be just like her."

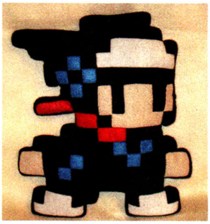
Now a 24-year-old student studying music composition in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Morse has the skills and the wherewithal to at least make herself look very convincingly like her childhood idol, as evidenced in these stunning pictures. Her homemade costume, based on Zelda's from The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, perfectly captures the spirit of the heroine and appears professionally done, but Morse assembled it all on her own, save for the prosthetic ears.

Morse says the costume took about 16 months to complete, with nearly $400 spent on materials. Creating it was a massive undertaking, starting with drafting every bit of the costume to scale and then spending months sewing, cutting, stitching, and much more. She even handcrafted all of the gems from scratch using clear polyester resin, and individually stitched to the bodice the nearly 180 glyphs, each of which took upward of two hours.

Following the successful creation of the Twilight Princess costume and its popularity at conventions, Morse plans to create several of the other costumes Zelda's worn over the years. She's already completed the outfits from Zelda II: The Adventure of Link and Spirit Tracks/The Wind Waker/The Minish Cap, and plans to tackle either Ocarina of Time or Oracle of Ages/Oracle Seasons next. Whatever her choice, we're looking forward to seeing the stellar results!

—ANDREW H.





FANDOM

Plush Perfection

Link, Kirby, and more come to life—with cotton innards.

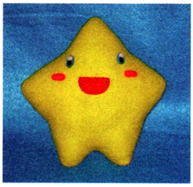
LET'S BE HONEST: sometimes seeing a character in a game or on the box isn't enough—sometimes you want to grab that beloved hero and squeeze the daylights out of it. Michael Wootton and Jenna Cook are able to do just that with some of their favorite gaming icons, as these two intrepid crafters have been creating their own custom plush toys in their spare time.

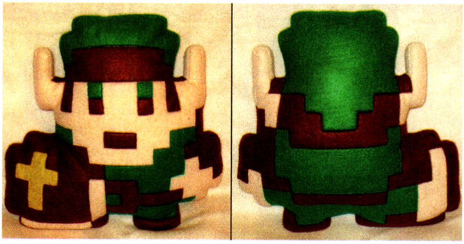
Among their adorable creations are Kirby, The Legendary Starfy, Mr. Saturn from EarthBound, and a Metroid, as well as 8-bit-style versions of Link, Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man, and Retro Game Challenge's Haggle Man.

The Roseville, California-based couple met more than four years ago, and the 21-year-old Wootton says the pair started gaming together shortly after they began dating. After Wootton got the itch by working on a plush project with a friend, the 23-year-old Cook became his steady crafting partner, leading to the aforementioned projects and numerous others.

According to Wootton, making each plush is fairly inexpensive, with maybe $10 of materials needed on average, though finding time between work and school obligations can be a challenge. Luckily, it's a true team effort. "Jenna usually works on the bigger parts, since she sews a lot faster than I do, and I take care of doing the more intricate details," he says. "After that, we put all the parts together, stuff it, sew it all up, and take some pictures!"

Next up for the pair are several potential projects, including a plan to create all of Kirby's hats and costumes from the Super Smash Bros. series, as well as a felt-based "painting" inspired by the upcoming Kirby's Epic Yarn. **—ANDREW H.**





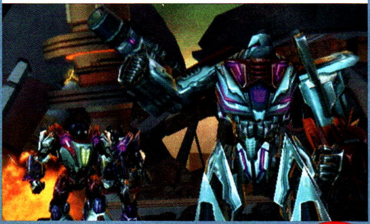
Plush toys are cool. 8-bit-style Link is cool. Put them together, and you get one great piece of fandom.

WRITE *your own* CAPTION

SCREEN TEST

SEND CAPTION TO screentest@nintendopower.com.

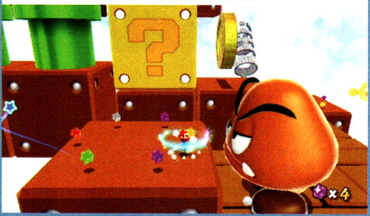
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



When you asked if we had tickets to the gun show, we thought you meant something else.

Here's our caption. THINK YOU CAN DO BETTER?

VOLUME 257'S SHOT



"Giant Goomba was upset when he relized people were ignoring his 'No Spinning' sign." **—NINJAGINJA**

"First stepping on me, and now spinning like a ballerina—when are you ever gonna fight like a man?" **—BILLY W.**

"Why do I have a feeling this is going to become 'Mario: Goomba's Inside Story'?" **—MATTHEW L.**

"After being stared down by the giant goomba for so long, Mario realized he had a nervous twitch." **—ADAM K.**

"The bottle labled 'Drink Me' not only made Mario shrink, but it also messed with his depth perception." **—TRISKA**

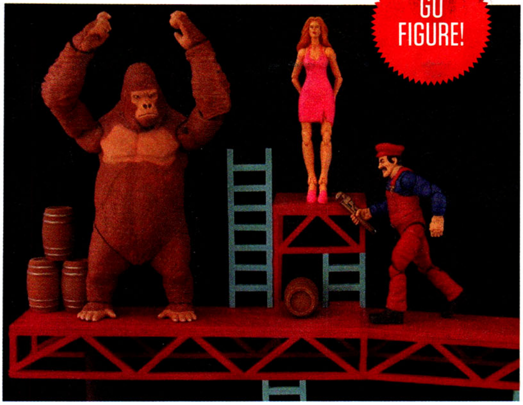
"Mario, this is boring. Can't we do something other than charades?" **—KEVIN B.**

"Mario's attempts at hypnotizing goombas with the power of funk had excellent results." **—ZAMEZ**

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

GO FIGURE!



FANDOM

Kong Customs

You've never seen Donkey Kong quite like this.

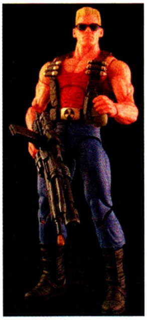
CUSTOM FIGURE MAESTRO Rick Dries blew us away earlier this year with his handcrafted action figures inspired by NES greats Punch-Out!! and Pro Wrestling (Vol. 254), and he's done it again with an impressive set of Donkey Kong custom creations. As with his previous game-based toys, the 33-year-old Cherry Hill, New Jersey native pieced together these tributes from existing action figures along with plenty of epoxy clay and paint.

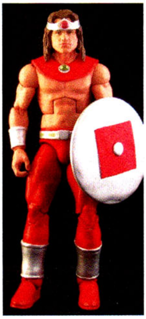
Kong started as a figure of DC Comics supervillain Gorilla Grodd, which Dries modified and painted; Pauline was transformed from an Emma Frost figure from Marvel Comics. As for the very serious and determined-looking Mario, Dries says he's constructed from a "hodgepodge of parts," though his iconic overalls were sculpted from the aforementioned clay.

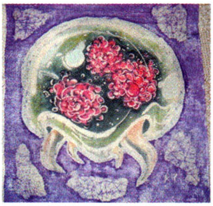
What really sells the scene, though, is the handmade base, complete with the trademark barrels and ladders. According to Dries, it was the hardest part of the process, as he had to cut and glue together pieces of modeling wood, and then paint it in the familiar colors. The barrels were purchased at a craft store but given a fresh coat of paint and detailed to match the overall aesthetic of the set.

In addition to the Donkey Kong set and his previous Punch-Out!! and Pro Wrestling creations, Dries has managed to crank out excellent custom-made figures based on Rygar and Duke Nukem. Each started as a WWE wrestling figure, but Dries's incredible handiwork turned them into something completely different. Next up for him is a set of figures based on Doom, and we're plenty stoked to see how he does justice to the venerable first-person-shooter franchise. **—ANDREW H.**

DK has never looked scarier.







FANDOM

Groovy Metroid

Evil space creatures and batik are a surprisingly good fit.

NORMALLY, running into one of Samus Aran's energy-draining adversaries is cause for alarm, but you won't have to lock and load your missiles here—this batik Metroid made by Kimberly Young, 18, of Sarasota, Florida, looks pretty chill. With a little guidance from a friend, Young crafted the Metroid-inspired cloth piece at an after-school open art studio using hot wax, a paint brush, and colored dyes. The Chozo would be proud, especially considering it was her first try.

"I had a lot of fun with this project because I got to have a taste of a different style of art," says Young, noting batik isn't a method usually taught at school. "I loved bringing my creation to life." Though it was initially a toss-up between creating a batik character from the Legend of Zelda series or one from the Metroid games, she settled on the infamous and iconic space creature since it meshed a little easier with the art form. When fall comes, this bad boy will find a home on Young's dorm-room wall, and she hopes to tackle other game characters in the future. **—NATHAN M.**

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Join us in 30 short days when we, alongside many of the gaming community's most notable names, will celebrate 25 years of the Nintendo Entertainment System. The groundbreaking console gave us Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda, Metroid, and countless other classics, so you'd better believe that we're going to give something good in return!

NOVEMBER 2010 VOL. 260

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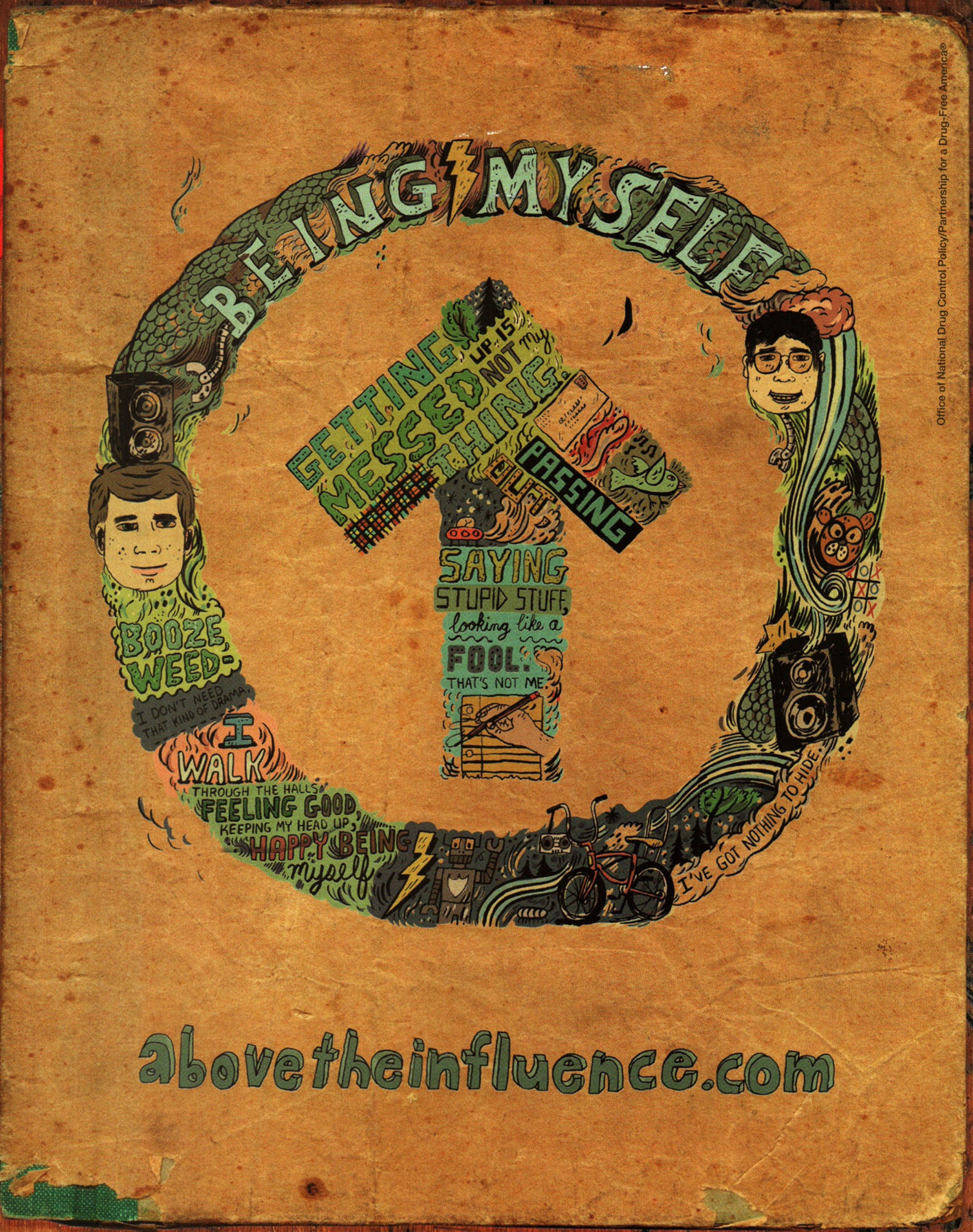
BEING MYSELF
GETTING MESSED UP IS NOT MY THING.
PASSING OUT
SAYING STUPID STUFF, looking like a FOOL. THAT'S NOT ME.
BOOZE, WEED- I DON'T NEED THAT KIND OF DRAMA.
I WALK THROUGH THE HALLS FEELING GOOD, KEEPING MY HEAD UP, HAPPY BEING myself
I'VE GOT NOTHING TO HIDE
abovetheinfluence.com

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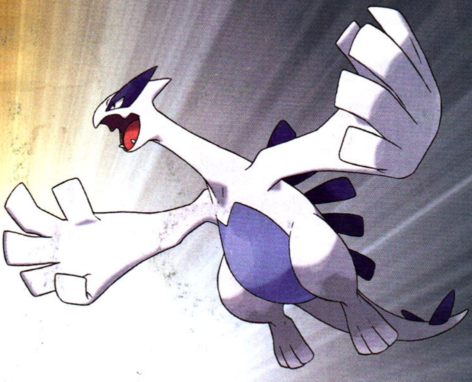
★ WHICH POKÉMON WILL YOU TAKE ON YOUR ADVENTURE? ★



Pokémon™ HeartGold Version Pokémon™ SoulSilver Version

Take the adventure with you with the Pokéwalker!

Not shown actual size.

KANGASKHAN
was caught!
LEFT: 2
X Sp. Def
found!
FERALIGATR Lv50
LUGIA Lv50
27/275
The Liechi Berry raised
LUGIA's Attack!

Catch Pokémon with your Pokéwalker™ accessory and transfer them to your *Pokémon HeartGold Version* or *Pokémon SoulSilver Version* game to join you in your thrilling adventure!

The Pokéwalker can be used in many different ways. Items found with it can be used in *Pokémon HeartGold Version* and *Pokémon SoulSilver Version* games to help you on your adventure!

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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB Mild Cartoon Violence

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NINTENDO DS

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